

13 January 2003

ENGLAND – INDEPENDENT IN EUROPE?

A fountain in the Andalucian town of Nerja has prompted Ian Hudgton, Scottish National Party Member of the European Parliament to ask Foreign Secretary, Jack Straw, whether the UK government thinks England, and by default Scotland, should be Independent in Europe.

The MEP's queries were prompted by a letter he received from a constituent who had returned to Scotland from a trip to Andalucia. The constituent had visited the town of Nerja where they came upon the town's Fountain of Europe, constructed last year to mark Spain's presidency of the EU. The fountain, comprising stones from the fifteen member states, on which the name of each is inscribed, was supported, as the explanatory notices adjacent to the fountain explain, by the embassies of all fifteen countries. What is surprising is that there is no stone from the United Kingdom. Why? Because, sitting proudly between the stones for Italy and Spain, is a block clearly inscribed in block capitals "ENGLAND"!

On receiving the letter, Mr Hudgton penned the following to Jack Straw and now awaits the Foreign Secretary's response with interest.

"Dear Mr Straw,

I have received an interesting letter and photograph from constituents who recently enjoyed a holiday in Andalucia, and who visited the Fountain of Europe in Nerja during their stay.

They have written to me asking me to make enquiries on their behalf about something they found particularly puzzling regarding this fountain and on which I hope you may be able to shed some light. What they found surprising was that the stone supplied by the United Kingdom was in fact inscribed in block capitals with "ENGLAND". As all the other stones in the structure are inscribed with the names of the member states of the European Union, they found this rather strange, given that England is not in fact a member state.

You will of course have gathered from my political affiliation that I would be very happy indeed to see England as a member of the EU in its own right, once Scotland becomes an independent member state. However (and do correct me if I'm wrong) I do not believe this to be the current view of your Government! As the UK Government was involved in the construction of this fountain, through the offices of the British consular services in Spain, I am sure that the many Scots who visit this Andalucian town each year would welcome your explanation as to why the UK's stone is so inscribed.

Finally, if it is not – yet – your Government's intention to back my Party's calls for Scotland (along with England and Wales) to become a full member of the EU, what steps do you intend to take to rectify the glaringly apparent error on the fountain in Nerja?

With all good wishes for a happy and peaceful 2003,

*Yours sincerely
Ian Hudghton MEP*

NOTES: See attached photograph of the fountain, or visit www.nerja.org, click on residents/extranjeros, then select Fuente de Europa.