



Monday 5th October
The Lion Hotel

Minutes

o Introduction

Marilyn, Harold and Ken sent their apologies. We say goodbye to Judith Rose and Anne Duggan who have decided to leave the group. We welcomed John Jones and June Clarke who came along for a 'taster' session.

Members present were:

Helen, Joy, Libby, Margaret, Margaret H, Mike, Pam, Sue, Viv B, Viv S

Sometimes, by the time a topic comes to the top of the list, it has lost its immediacy and sometimes we can't remember what provoked it. So it is proposed in future to leave a spare topic which can be suggested at the start of the meeting and will be discussed at that meeting.

o Discussion Topics

A short summary of the subjects and discussions follows:

If the Prime minister declares that he would never press the nuclear weapon button, can that nuclear weapon still be a deterrent?

- o The short answer was 'NO', but even if there is a nuclear weapon and other countries believe that the government would use it didn't stop terrorists attacking the World Trade Centre in the USA.
- o For sure, if you do press the button, you are encouraging another country to annihilate you.
- o But didn't dropping the bomb on Hiroshima put a very quick end to WW2? Yes, it did. By the way, the man who DID press that button committed suicide very shortly afterwards.
- o The nuclear gamble is now much more risky with drones the USA and the UK have, which can kill hundreds of people at one time. In fact, couldn't they replace Trident if we're more worried about money than morals?
- o It was observed that Scotland's position on this issue must be divided between a high moral stance and wanting to protect jobs on Clydeside. Could we not have a dummy nuclear weapon, to have the same effect

without the cost? No, it was felt that espionage and online 'outings' are too prevalent to keep a secret like that.

- We all agreed that we would be safer without a nuclear weapon, as then those countries so armed, would not have any need or excuse to attack us. We concluded that the real reason for the UK continuing to keep these weapons is simply to assert its standing in the world league of power.
- Unanimously, we all agreed, that given the power to do so, we would disarm our nuclear weapons.

Should it be a crime to send or post online, a naked picture of yourself?

- This subject has come up because of recent cases where teenagers send naked pictures of themselves to boy/girlfriends who, when the relationship ends, re-sends the picture to all their online acquaintances, which causes shame and embarrassment.
- The criminal should not be the initial sender, as that was done in the belief that the receiver would respect the privacy enjoyed between them. The criminal should be the receiver who puts the picture online for all and sundry to see – with the intention of humiliating the sender. This has been dubbed 'revenge porn' and apparently the law is going to be changed to deal with this.
- For us, senior citizens, it may seem too personal an action to send a naked picture of yourself to anyone at all, but on reflection, we were made to see that, for youngsters, it is far less personal, than to undress in the presence of your girl/boyfriend.
- The internet and instant communications were one again brought into the blame arena, but rebutted heartily by our IT man, who (again) stressed that we should blame the message and not the messenger.
- We agreed with the new intended law but hoped that the craze of taking naked pictures would soon become outdated.

Is over-population really the biggest problem the world has to face?

- We began with an overview of the present thinking that the world cannot sustain an ever increasing population – there is only so much farming land and climate change means less of the land surface will have agreeable temperate climates. Furthermore, the water supply is finite too.
- In opposition to this, the first point raised was the shocking waste of food by:
 - Supermarkets rejecting cultivated produce which isn't the 'right' shape or size
 - Shops and supermarkets throwing away unsold produce at the end of the day, when it could be given to food banks
 - Households in the affluent west wasting 25% of the food they buy – because of over-buying and slavish obedience to the sell-by/use-by/best-buy dates on the package
- An article in The Times from a farmer explained that the yield of seeds is now at around 60 or 70 per grain, whereas in the 1300s it would be about 4. That, plus sophisticated systems using satellites to tell where to plant/fertilize, and the improvements to food through genetic modification mean that it's proving cheaper and easier to feed 7 billion today than it was to feed 3 billion in 1960. Add to that the fact that, as countries become more affluent and

better educated, the number of children they have reduces, we began to agree that Malthus' predictions, back in the 18th century, have been trounced. Over population is not the biggest problem we have at all. Indeed, Germany's birth-rate has become so low, they have welcomed immigrants to fill the empty workplaces – but that is another question.

Should we abolish the House of Lords?

- We all agreed instantly that a second house in Westminster is necessary to balance the party-political urges of the Commons and we set to listing the rules for it:
 - Members should have distinguished themselves in their field
 - Titles should die when the members die
 - Numbers should be limited to the number of seats
 - Each ministry should be allocated a number of seats to fill
 - There should be a fixed term of service (10 years)
 - Members should be paid a salary

Should we buy cheap clothes and cheap chickens?

- A first thought was that we should not do so, because it means someone, somewhere is not being paid enough. But then we separated the clothes from the chicken because with the latter, we were concerned with the welfare of the chicken as well as the worker.
- On the whole, conditions for farm animals is good in the UK and we should be aware that, the more we raise the standards for animals in this country, the more we force supermarkets to buy from abroad – thus making our own farmers suffer.
- Viv S, coming from a farming background, gave a very informative account of the dairy situation in the UK. Milk is cheap because farmers are becoming more productive in their methods: cows milked more frequently, cows kept inside sheds rather than outside so that their energy goes into the milk production. But the farmers do this because the price of milk is going down. Dairy prices have gone down even faster because, as a result of the UK putting trade sanctions on Russian exports, the Russians have stopped importing dairy produce from the UK – and that used to be a huge amount. So a vicious circle has formed where the only way the farmer has to maintain his living is to produce more milk, taken nationally, the situation is aggravating the situation. Isn't it time the government stepped in to raise the minimum price of milk?
- A rather different argument with clothes. Yes, there are some very underpaid people (and children) in place like Bangladesh, who are producing cheap clothes for the west, but without that trade, and without us buying the clothes they make, they wouldn't have a job at all. Maybe this is how countries progress – after all, two hundred years ago a similar situation: low paid workers and children working in mills was the norm here. Also, Sue pointed out that unlike two hundred years ago in the UK, these poor countries do benefit from international aid to help set up businesses and provide medical help.

- Future Discussion Topics
 - Is trade more important than human rights?
 - Is religion harmful?
 - Does misogyny still exist?
 - Should we pay compensation for slavery?

- Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Monday 2nd November at 1000hrs** in The Lion Hotel. The topics for this discussion will be posted on the Café Society webpage nearer the time.

