



Monday 2nd November 2015
The Lion Hotel

Minutes

o Introduction

With the absence of Vivienne B, Helen kindly chaired the meeting.

Marilyn sent her apologies. We welcomed a perspective member Dick who came along for a 'taster' session.

Members present were:

Helen, Ken, Joy, Libby, Margaret, Margaret H, Mike, Pam, Phil, Sue, 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:

Is Trade more important than Human Rights?

- o This discussion followed from our government agreeing to trade with China over new nuclear power facilities. China will invest a great deal of money in return for very big guaranteed returns. The Chinese president Xi Jinping was given a magnificent state reception, despite China's appalling record on Human Rights
- o Interestingly, one of the first comments (which was just about universally agreed) was that Osbourne is not a man of principle
- o It was agreed that trade is important, not in the least from the point of view of maintaining good relationships with other countries. It is probably necessary to be on good terms in order to do anything about human rights
- o It was pointed out that if we did not trade with any country with a poor record, then there would be few left- who would we trade with? We trade with Saudi Arabia for instance, but would we draw the line at trading with ISIS? Some people thought that Human Rights had improved in China anyway, but others thought there was little evidence for this

- Having agreed that trade is essential we discussed what goods should be traded, with particular reference to arms trading. One person remarked that we might think more carefully if each time a conflict was shown on television, subtitles explained who had sold arms to which side
- Some of the group thought the arms trade was justified in order to maintain the jobs of British workers, while others believed nothing excused this. A distinction was drawn between manufacturing arms for our own defence, and making them to sell to others, particularly to rogue states
- We no longer produce shackles for slaves in Birmingham (to our knowledge - somebody does) and this has not harmed British people too much
- What else should be traded? One person said, to much agreement, that it seems ludicrous to privatise our energy industry in order to sell it off to the control of other governments. Energy is a particularly sensitive issue of course, and several people thought that we could do a lot more for ourselves if we had the political will to collect all due taxes and maybe retrain people to build infrastructure etc.
- Having agreed to trade, should we have given the Chinese representatives such a huge state welcome? Very mixed responses to this, with some whole - heartedly agreeing, and some quite the opposite. No consensus was reached!

Is Religion harmful?

- There was a surprisingly measured response to this question
- Undoubtedly a lot of harm has been done in the past and today in the name of religion, but maybe the same people would have found another excuse without religion. (just as good things done in the name of religion might have been done anyway by the same people)
- Most Muslims and Christians today are peaceful, and only a minority take their holy writings literally. This sparked a debate about the harm which can come from a straight reading of the Christian bible (stoning people to death for instance for small misdemeanours) Some people thought the bible needed to be interpreted though, and the basic message was of love and peace. This was not universally agreed
- It was pointed out that Roman Catholics are over represented in our prisons, and on other scales of dysfunctionality. It was agreed that it was probably deprivation that was far more to blame than religion

Does misogyny still exist?

- We decided to confine the discussion to this country, as there is little debate over the existence of misogyny in other countries.
 - First of all, we tried to define exactly what is meant by misogyny, misandry and sexism. All are fortunately illegal in this country, but undoubtedly do still exist-although to nowhere near such an extent as in the past. It was pointed out that we will have misogyny while we have the equivalent to the page three girl. In some case women can be their own worst enemies!
 - Everyone agreed that men and women are different but deserve equal rights and opportunities
- **Future Discussion Topics**
 - Should we pay compensation for slavery?

o Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on **Monday 7th December at 1000hrs** in The Lion Hotel. The topics for this discussion will be posted on the Café Society webpage nearer the time.

U3A COFFEE TIME

Take a break from your shopping
Pop in for a tea or coffee and general
Shrewsbury U3A chit chat

Art Appreciation, Birdwatching, Bridge 1, Bridge 2, Chess, Cinema, Computing, Creative Writing, Digital Photography, Drawing/Painting, Economics, Family History, Gardening, Golf Croquet, History, Jazz, Knitting, Local History, Looking at Art, Lunch Club, Mah Jong, Music, Nature Watch, Philosophy, Reading, Science, Social Club, Table Tennis, Walking, Writing

THE FIRST FRIDAY OF THE MONTH

10.30am to 12.30am
The Beaconsfield Club
Meadow Place opposite the bus station

River
Smithfield Rd
Meadow Place
Castle Gates
Bus
Beaconsfield
Library
Train
Castle

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