



Monday 4th January 2016
The Lion Hotel

Minutes

o Introduction

Ken and Marilyn sent their apologies.

Members present were:

Pam, Margaret H, Margaret T, Sue, Harold, Mike, Viv S, Viv B, Libby, Joy.

We adopted the new, simpler way of ordering pots of tea and coffee, which seemed to work well.

o Discussion Topics

A short summary of the subjects and discussions follows:

Could a basic income from the government end the benefits trap?

- o This radical idea seemed to appeal to all the members right away. We could see how it would simplify the system enormously as there would be no need to work out how much each applicant should have, as each and every adult would be paid a basic amount
- o Wouldn't it be unfair to give the rich the same amount though? This has already been thought out and the better-off would pay back the basic payment in taxes (and more) which is how the system would be funded
- o Although for us this is only an academic exercise, Finland are going to introduce such a system, in several patterns and over a year or two to decide which, if any, might work
- o We all agreed it would do away with desperate poverty, provide a base from which people may have the confidence to start up a business and cover periods of illness or childcare
- o Pam mentioned the Speenhamland scheme that was applied by a local authority in Berkshire back in the 18th century where they decided to give the poor a basic allowance to alleviate their poverty. One result of the scheme was that local employers began to pay less and the scheme was eventually abandoned
- o We also began to see that a one amount payment to all may not be fair to those with children to feed or those with disabilities
- o Nevertheless, we look forward to reading the results of the Finnish study and we all agreed there were enough positives in the idea to take it seriously, whilst acknowledging, as Viv S pointed out, that the new 'universal credit' which the

Conservatives are trying to introduce does have some of the same qualities of simplicity.

To tip or not to tip – or should tipping be abolished?

- Tipping seems to be a mish-mash of habits or protocol since every one of us could mention an occasion when we didn't want to tip but felt obliged to do, or didn't know how much to tip. At least two members knew of youngsters who had part-time jobs in pubs or restaurants and who had to put their tips into a common pot and who didn't receive anything back
- One member said it was right to tip people giving a service and earning little, but not right to tip the owners/managers of a company – unless it was a small local company who the customer thought was undercharging. However, another member suggested that giving tips only perpetuates a system where people are paid too little
- Quite a lot of us thought that here in England we have it about right – we are not committing a huge faux-pas by not tipping and can tip any amount we like, unlike in the US or France where tipping is very much expected. Some of us thought that it is an outdated custom and should be abolished and a true living wage brought into force. This would prevent a customer being able to patronise a worker by giving a small amount of cash in his hand

How should we decide who can enter the UK and who should be banned?

- This subject was firstly clarified. We were not talking about immigration here, but visitors to the UK on a temporary basis. It was prompted by Donald Trump's announcement to his supporters in the US that, if in power, he would not allow any Muslims to enter the US at all at the moment. Now, Donald Trump owns land in Scotland and therefore, presumably travels to the UK now and again. So, should we ban a person like Donald Trump from entering the UK because of his extreme views?
- We began by agreeing that freedom of speech is an important right in a democratic country and even if we completely oppose the opinions of an individual, he has the right to come to the UK and express those opinions if he wishes
- However, if that individual's speeches were to incite people to violence on the streets of Britain, should this not be prevented?
- We were beginning to waver at this thought until Pam told us to remember that back in the days of apartheid, Nelson Mandela was considered persona non grata in the UK and refused permission to enter, whilst at the same time, the dictator General Pinochet was welcomed in the UK by the Thatcher government, thus demonstrating how these decisions are made politically more than morally. So we came back to our original statement that everyone has the right to come to the UK and express his views, unless he/she is a criminal wanted by our police, when he/she would be allowed into the country and promptly charged

Should the naked man be locked up?

- This last-minute subject was about Stephen Gough, the chap who likes nothing better than to walk north and south throughout the land wearing nothing but his hat and boots (and a rather chaffing rucksack). He has been imprisoned but keeps returning to his chosen way of life
- Helen told us it was not an offence to appear naked in public. Only if someone complains of being offended is the nudist asked to cover up

