



Monday 1st February
The Lion Hotel

Minutes

o Introduction

Ken, Marilyn, Harold and Helen sent their apologies.

Members present were:

Pam, Margaret H, Margaret T, Sue, Viv S, Viv B, Libby, Joy and Phil.

We continued 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:

Should rich countries pay compensation for the slavery they imposed on other countries in the past?

- There seems to be a fashion for demanding compensation or official apologies for wrong-doings in the past – but what use is an apology unless it is directly from the offender?
- We can all claim foreigners subjugating us. We British can cite the Romans, the Normans and the Vikings, to name but a few
- Moreover, can we apply current values to the past when accepted mores were very different then? We agreed that we have certainly moved on from imperialist conquering but there were also side effects which could be beneficial
- Shouldn't we rather concentrate on eradicating slavery still found today in underdeveloped countries?
- Returning ancient middle-eastern statues whilst still bombing and causing suffering in these countries would be an insulting gesture. Let's concentrate on behaving better towards other peoples in the present day rather than trying to rewrite history
- In the same way, taking down the statue of Cecil Rhodes in front of Oriel College, Oxford because he was racist by today's standards, would be to deny the good he brought to the country in infrastructure, language, modernising and opportunity-making for the indigenous population. We were glad that the motion was defeated at the university and the statue remains

Is 'positive discrimination' always a good thing?

- Several news items provoked this recurring topic: Black actors are complaining that they don't have a fair number of nominations in the Oscars, and that they don't have enough parts – especially the starring roles
- We had to admit, on Phil's assertion, that there is something tribal about our reactions until we stop to allow reason to prevail. That is because we are basically tribal and when a person from a different 'tribe' approaches us we notice first the differences before the individual character
- Again, we have moved on a lot in half a century. No longer are there 'No Blacks, no Irish' signs outside bed and breakfast houses, and no longer do we use a national adjective as a verb, such as to 'jew' someone (to cheat someone), or to 'welsh' on a deal (to break a promise)
- It was agreed that to kick-start a change in unfair practices towards women or people of a different race, positive discrimination is a good thing but not if it involves disqualifying other applicants who are better qualified
- Similarly, with unfair discrimination towards disabled people. We agreed that it is right to include disabled people in everyday life, including television programmes, which should portray life as it is now and not as it was when physically and mentally disabled people were ignored or kept away in institutions. There was one example however, where a physically disabled man with a very disturbing facial disfigurement was in a reality show to see how he would be treated in a restaurant. It was felt rather unfair to criticise the restaurant staff for showing him to a back corner table. After all, it may have been for his comfort as much as anyone else's

What is the best decision you have ever made – and the worst?

What are your pet hates?

- Everyone seemed to enjoy thinking about this and most people best decisions were about deciding to have a child/another child. One member said that a decision to move south for some twenty years then back again to Shropshire gave her a feeling of having lived an extra life's chapter. Pet hates included modernisms in the English language, downright bad use of English, litter - especially the plastic take-away litter near one member's house which marked out the eating distance from the nearest MacDonald's

○ Future Discussion Topics:

- Should life-long education be encouraged?

More topics needed please! Email them to: vivienne.barker@gmail.com

○ Date of Next Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on **Monday 7th March** at **1000hrs** in **The Lion Hotel**. The topics for this meeting will be posted on the [Café Society webpage](#) nearer the time

