



Monday 7th March
The Lion Hotel

Minutes

○ Introduction

Joy Kay and Sue Burton sent their apologies.

Members present were:

Pam, Margaret H, Margaret T, Viv S, Viv B, Libby, Helen, Marilyn, Ken, Harold, Mike and Phil.

We also welcomed a new lady, Sue, who was having a 'taster' session, and Simon, a visitor who was interested in the Humanist topic.

○ Discussion Topics

A short summary of the subjects and discussions follows:

Should life-long education be encouraged?

- The subject was introduced quite passionately by Margaret (T) who herself had found that studying Art after retirement had given her new knowledge, confidence and new friends. So when the courses were stopped for lack of funding, she felt very let down. Recent research has shown that older people who pursue educational hobbies live longer and healthier
- Another reason for continuing education in adulthood is that careers have become more short-term. We can no longer assume that the first career we undertake will see us through our working life. We will have to become more adaptable and willing to add to our knowledge and skill base over many years
- Marilyn suggested futurelearn.com which offers free courses on any subject you can think of and with participants from all over the world. A brilliant solution for careers but we realised that the sociability we look for isn't provided online, you need to meet real people in real places. Also, it may not be academic knowledge we are seeking, but practical skills, so perhaps it is 'learning' we need to encourage rather than 'education', suggested Libby
- Moreover, if this continuous learning ethic was to be encouraged by the government, it would have the effect of saving NHS money as it would

undoubtedly reduce loneliness and inactivity which cause poor health and earlier death

How can you make inheritance fairer?

- Margaret (H) introduced the topic and told us how the gap between the rich and the poor is at its widest for many years. Upward social mobility is more difficult now than 50 years ago. So how could the gap be narrowed?
- A recent TV programme talked about giving all 18 year-olds in the UK a lump sum in order to equalise their chances in life. One member asserted that within a little time, the money would have filtered up to the top again, to be inherited by their next generation
- There was the suggestion that it's not a matter of money but of intelligence; that the upper classes have more of the intelligence gene. Another member riposted, 'Anyone who talks about an 'intelligence gene' doesn't know what they are talking about.'
- At least public (i.e. private) schools should be abolished – and at the very least should be deprived of their charitable status, which is a misnomer
- Is it really desirable to have an unmixed society? Suggested another member. It's surely how society has always been?
- Yes, asserted someone else – well, at least in terms of money. On the contrary, all workers should be paid the same salary, from surgeons to dustmen, and then people will look for other satisfaction from their work
- Whilst the group on the whole didn't think this would result in a fairer society, we thought it would be interesting to follow the experiment being introduced in one of the Nordic countries where they are giving all the population the same allowances, to see how they fare over several years

Is humanism a religion?

- Our visitor, Simon started us off by stating that it depends on your definition of religion, but usually a religion has some of the following elements: a belief in a God, a belief in after-life, sacred books of dogma, amongst others. So we were able to say that Buddhism for example, is considered a religion although there is no belief in a God. Therefore, by these terms, Humanism is not a religion as it has none of the above elements
- Humanism differs from Atheism, which is merely a negative non-belief which offers nothing else, whereas Humanism affirms the potential good in humans and a belief that we can support one another and enjoy the life we have
- The Quakers were mentioned by Pam because Quakers are not obliged to believe in God and they are well-known for their philanthropism. Like the Humanists, they can be non-deist yet hold Christian principles
- Ken told us that religious practice is diminishing. In one denomination it has reduced by 3% per annum since the 1960s and yet people still don't say they are atheist. Everyone agreed that although comparative religion should be taught in schools, all schools these days should be non-religious. One member pointed out that in an Anglican school in a Lancashire town, its pupils are 80% Muslim
- Finally, Simon accepted that Humanism, is not a religion, but can be classed as a philosophy

Do you believe honesty is the best policy?

- In general, yes but one can lie with good intentions: for example, to save your own skin, to save embarrassment, to save offending another person
- Sometimes the occasion matters as much as the subject. If a friend asks you if you like her dress, it might matter if she asks the question *before* she buys or after!
- The one area we would like more honesty, on a serious level, is in banking. No arguments there

What is the strangest thing you have ever eaten?

- Snake, sea creatures, crocodile, deep-fried spiders

○ Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be on Monday 4th April 2016 at 10.00am at The Lion Hotel

○ Future Topics

A list of discussion topics that have been suggested are shown below. If you have others to offer or if you can think of a last minute topical subject, please email Vivienne (vivienne.barker@gmail.com)

- Are some people more important than others?
- In or out of the EU?
- How would you feel if Donald Trump's finger was on the button?
- Is democracy always the best governing system?

