



Monday 4th April
The Lion Hotel

Minutes

○ Introduction

17 members were present, including 2 new members, Denise Mulford and Irene Bushell. It was decided that we cannot accept any further new members.

○ Discussion Topics

A short summary of the subjects and discussions follows:

Are some people more important than others?

- On a personal and emotional level, we all agreed that our families are more important to us than other people
- Although we like to think of all humans being of equal value, we know, for example that surgeons 'grade' patients waiting for transplants according to age, state of physical or mental health etc
- When we read news of catastrophes, there is always more coverage and importance given to those occurring nearer to us in the UK. One recent example is the two tragedies in Brussels and Lahore, when most coverage was given to the Brussels one
- Of course much progress has been made since the days of slavery, yet still there are black people in the USA who have less self-worth today, because of generations of poor treatment
- The notion of 'worth' we decided, is thought to be about the role an individual plays in society. Stephen Hawkins, for example, has made such contributions to the knowledge of the world that, he may not be 'worth' more than another individual, but he may be thought more important
- This question of importance according to your role in society is impossible to standardise. In an arctic blizzard, an Eskimo would be more important than any banker who happened to be in the group
- At the moment there is a dispute over the number of black actors who get an award, or even a role to play – and on a more trivial level, there is a complaint that female presenters seem always to be placed on the right of our screens and the males on the left
- As to our basic 'worth', one member declared that we cannot be all of the same worth as your worth is what you do with your life
- We concluded that society has to start from a baseline of people having the same worth, that we all have prejudices but our treatment of others should be the same. In fact, this is exactly how the Quakers behave to their fellow men – they do not use titles in addressing people and don't doff their hats or bow in front of 'more important' people than themselves

In or out of the EU?

Before presenting our opinions, we took a vote. There were just 3 people wanting to leave the EU and with one person undecided, the rest all wanted to stay in the EU.

For

- The EU has done a lot for the working people in terms of health and safety at work. In fact, if our country had respected the EU regulations for flood protection, we wouldn't have had the flooding we suffered last winter. In fact, we are better looked after by Europe than by our own government
- It's better to be on the side of Europe than allied with the USA
- Even Obama wants us to stay in
- It's important for a free western world to have a joint European military force
- In the event of a bank failure, we are better and stronger with all the European banks

Against

- It is such a waste of our money to contribute a fortune and not get enough back
- It is another level of bureaucracy, which confuses and wastes money again
- We lose our voice in governing our country. If my UK government does something I disagree with; at the next election I can vote them out, but not if the government is, in effect, in Brussels and I didn't vote for the bureaucrats there
- At this point we took another vote and found no change. We had to conclude that we decide on gut reactions. Ken's gut reaction is a feeling of wanting to belong, to work with others
- The migration problem is clouding the issue and will be the biggest reason for coming out of the EU
- Harold maintains that whatever we choose, the TTIP (Transatlantic Trade Investment Partnership) is here to stay. The mere fact that if the UK wanted out, it would have to wait 20 years before acting. TTIP doesn't have much to say on the subject but along with the large corporations, it will be in charge

How would you feel if Donald Trump had his finger on the button?

- Donald Trump doesn't talk economics – just get the American prejudices flowing
- If Donald Trump has his finger on the button, it is the result of democracy
- The last American election was close and this one is set to be close too, but if Ted Cruz wins, the prospects are even worse according to Harold, because Cruz is nothing but Trump squared!

Is Democracy always the best governing system?

- We acknowledged that Myanmar (formally Burma) is at last enjoying a democratic government thanks to the unceasing work of Aung San Suu Kyi
- Our own House of Lords is not democratic
- A proportional representation is more democratic than first past the post.
- In a democracy, if there are three idiots to vote for – what kind of democracy is that?

There should be an alternative voting system. Helen gave us an example of how that would work:

The example is ten people deciding where to go for a night out. Three want to go to the coffee shop, and seven want to go for a beer. Trouble is they fancy four different pubs between them. After the vote, as in our current system, the results are:

Venue	No. of Votes
Coffee Shop	3
Pub A	2
Pub B	2
Pub C	2
Pub D	1

So all end up drinking coffee, when a majority fancied a beer.

With the alternative voting system everyone has also expressed their second, third, fourth and fifth choice.

If there is no outright majority, the lowest vote (Pub D) is eliminated, and the second choice of anyone voting for Pub D is taken, and allocated perhaps, to Pub A.

If there is still no outright majority the process is repeated until there is.

It could well be that a lot of pub goers had coffee as their second choice, in which case this would still win. Or it may be that all the voters had Pub A as their second choice, so this would win.

- The internet and Facebook offer a new democracy which gives power to everyone – but this is democracy without responsibility
- There is now a Jeremy Corbyn factor wherein young people are becoming more inclined to vote and will be a factor in the next elections
- We realise that in some countries e.g. Libya, the dictator may have been toppled but only to be replaced by chaos
- Some countries are in different stages of development. One member told us that it is a fact that a strong dictatorship can produce people with long life expectancy

If you had to be trapped in a TV show for a month, which show would you choose?

Everyone had their say, property shows proving popular but nobody wanted to be in 'I'm a Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here!'

- FUTURE TOPICS

- What constitutes good manners?
- Should the statue of Clive be removed?

Please email the group co-ordinator if you have any appropriate discussion topics, especially if you can suggest a last-minute 'hot topic'.

- NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Monday 9th May at The Lion Hotel at 10.00am.

vivienne.barker@gmail.com

