

Suffolk Humanists Monthly Bulletin

October 2018

"Ten Minute Topics"

Our meeting on October 9th will be on 'Ten Minute Topics'. It is ages (possibly years) since we last did this but the plan is simple. Everyone comes along with one or more potential topics for discussion. We write them on bits of paper and put them all in a hat. The first is picked out and the originator – in less than a minute – introduces it and says why they think it is important. Everyone else can then chip in briefly with their thoughts. After 10 minutes that topic is closed and another picked from the hat. In the past, this format has provoked some very interesting discussions so hopes are high for this month's meeting.

7:30 pm at the EEFA/Coop Meeting Rooms, 47 St Helen's Street,
Ipswich, IP4 2JL

September meeting: Paul Hay "The Ethics of being a Vegan."

Paul, a retired head-teacher, decided to become a vegan relatively recently and his talk covered his motivation and the health benefits he has experienced.

He started by outlining the difference between vegetarianism and veganism. At its simplest, vegans consume no animal-derived products whatsoever. So whereas vegetarians may choose to consume dairy products including milk, cheese and eggs, these are absent from the vegan diet which is entirely plant-based. Paul pointed out that many vegans also choose not to use or wear products derived from animals such as leather or wool.

Two documentaries initially influenced Paul's decision. The first was a video made in 2011 called "Forks over knives" and the second was "What the health". He wasn't however converted solely by these documentaries but started his own research

reading papers and articles. The more he read the more he concluded that the best way to deal with all the bad effects of the western diet, some of which he was experiencing, was to adopt the basic plant-based vegan diet and avoid highly processed foods.

For him the results had been dramatic. He had lost weight and his overall health had improved significantly but the greatest benefit by far is that he is no longer classified as having Type 2 diabetes. He highlighted some of the health risks of veganism, especially that of vitamin B12 deficiency, but stressed that they could all be easily overcome. For example, many grains and fortified cereals contain B12. Soya milk with B12 is also available and supplements are available in tablet form. But it was not just health benefits. Paul summarised many of the cruelties that were part and parcel of the meat industry but concentrated mainly on the hidden practices within the dairy industry - some more gruesome than others.

There were many questions throughout the presentation... "Don't we need to consume animal products to get protein?" (Answer: No, it is available in plants). "What about eating fungi?" (Answer: most vegans are OK with mushrooms.) What about synthetic or cultured meat? (Answer: Undecided - but probably not. Why would you?)

Broader ethical issues about environmental issues and the contribution veganism can make to addressing world hunger were raised. For example it takes 10 kg of plant protein (often soya) to make 1 kg of meat indicating how inefficient animal farming actually is. This situation was made worse because much of the deforestation we see is so that crops can be grown for feeding animals rather than for direct

human consumption.

Certainly those of us who were 'only' vegetarians were left with a lot to think about.

Prayers before Council?

I thought that the issue of whether or not Local Council meetings could start with prayers had been resolved five or six years ago when it was ruled that attendees were perfectly entitled to meet beforehand and pray (or juggle or stand on their heads or do whatever they felt would improve the nature of their decision making) but that such activities were to be outside the formal council meeting and should not be an agenda item. However after hearing from one of our diligent members that prayers seemed to be part and parcel of a recent Council meeting in Felixstowe I thought it worth exploring further.

What has happened is that in 2015 the Local Government (Religious Observances) Act permitted all councils, including parishes, to hold prayers at the start of the sessions - should they so choose. This modified but did not fully reverse the 2013 decision. I've had a look through the agendas of some of our local councils and I didn't find any that featured prayers as an agenda item. My guess is that most have chosen to stick with the pre-2015 arrangement and either kept them voluntary and separate or not to have them at all. It looks from their agenda that Felixstowe are including time for a "Moment of Reflection" before meetings. In practice of course it may be that they have run together.

The important issue is whether or not any attendees or observers would have felt obliged to take part.

It would be good to have some definitive evidence one way or the other so let's have some information

from our members either by looking on-line or better still turning up at your next council meeting and seeing what actually happens. Let us know what you find.

Newsletter: A Call for Contributions

We aim to publish our Winter Edition at the end of November and would like to include contributions from as many members as possible. If you have something to contribute, possibly something you raised during the Ten Minute Topic meeting, please contact me on shands.editor@gmail.com.

Future meetings:

Saturday 27th October: 12:00 noon Lunch at Duke of York, Woodbridge.

Tuesday, 13th November: War Poetry
Please bring along a poem that is meaningful to you to present and discuss.

Saturday 24th November 12:00 noon Lunch at Duke of York, Woodbridge.

December: TBC (we usually attend the Ipswich UN Celebration of Human Rights in December but are still awaiting details)

January 8th Steve Hurd: The Uganda Humanist School Trust

Suffolk Humanists & Secularists

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