

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> September 2.00pm at Moordown Community Centre, Coronation Ave, BH9 1TW

## Inexplicable Phenomena

### A Mathematician Responds

*Barney Maunder-Taylor, 'Jester of Bournemouth' and maths expert, will respond to Simon Whipple's unbelievable tales. Click image to RSVP.*



As humanists and sceptics, none of us feels comfortable if we're told by a friend that they have seen something unbelievable, such as fairies at the bottom of their garden. We may wonder whether they have gone mad, or are lying, or are the victim of a practical joke. But how can we be sure that they really haven't seen something which can't be explained? And whose job is it to prove whether or not what they've described is an illusion?

In this two-handed talk, Simon Whipple will describe some apparently amazing events and Barney Maunder-Taylor will explore how he, as a mathematician, might respond. Each member of the audience will decide whether they are persuaded to believe that Simon's reports are true, or Barney's sceptical responses. Whatever you decide, after you have heard this talk, you will be well-equipped to respond the next time you hear that someone has seen the Loch Ness Monster.

**Barney Maunder-Taylor** has a double first in maths from Oxford University, is a former Champion of *Countdown*, runs the [East Dorset Maths Jam](#), and still holds the title of Jester of Bournemouth. A former cabaret juggler, Barney now divides his time equally between tutoring maths to university level in Dorset, and presenting maths shows. He has been a member of Dorset Humanists for several years and he has previously given an amusing maths presentation to Bournemouth Skeptics in the Pub.

**Simon Whipple** is a former Army Officer and is now a solicitor. He is a member of Dorset Humanists Committee. Many years ago he studied Philosophy at the University of St Andrews. He has always been interested in inexplicable phenomena, and he always wants to make sure that, however bizarre a theory may appear, it is not rejected by sceptics without a good reason.

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> September 7.30pm Elstead Hotel, 12-14 Knyveton Rd, Bournemouth BH1 3QP



# Inflation: beyond the headlines and towards the ethics of the fight against inflation

A talk by Henri Ruff. Inflation may be a bad thing, but does that necessarily mean that the current combat strategy is ethically sound? To make this enormous question a little easier to address, Henri will be breaking it down in to a few more manageable bite-sized pieces for a discussion. Is raising interest rates, which adds to costs, fit for the purpose of dampening already rising prices or does it fan the flames? Will policymakers confuse a cost-of-living crisis with an inflationary spiral and so mistakenly use weapons that disadvantage the most vulnerable? Both these ethical questions beg the underlying moral question of whether the fight against inflation should default to amoral technocrats or be under political leadership?

Henri is a member of Dorset Humanists and he runs a popular U3A course on economics.



A group of Dorset Humanists experienced another spectacular walk along the Jurassic Coast in August, taking in Lulworth Cove, Durdle Door, Man o' War Cove, St Oswald's Bay and a pause for Purbeck Ice Cream.

Man o' War Cove – photo by David

## Dates for your diary

Thursday 1 <sup>st</sup> Sept 7.30	Moon	Friendly pub social at Moon in the Square – find us on the ground floor on the right
Saturday 10 <sup>th</sup> September 2pm	Moordown	Inexplicable Phenomena – a Mathematician Responds
Wednesday 28 <sup>th</sup> September 7.30pm	Elstead Hotel	Henri Ruff - Inflation
Saturday 8 <sup>th</sup> October 2pm	Moordown	Humanist Schools in Uganda – Chris Smith

*Plus social events and more walks which will be announced on Dorset Humanists Meetup. Please check all events nearer the time in case of any venue changes. We respectfully ask you to take all reasonable precautions to ensure that you do not spread infection to others at our events. If in doubt, please stay at home. Videos are usually available later on YouTube.*





From left: Sir Steve Neel, Chairman of the 1984 Committee, and George Askwith, who counted the votes; Simon Whippleby compered the event; Cathy Silman (Prime Minister), Sir David Warden, Daniel Dancey, and Aaron Darkwood. Photo collage by Aaron Darkwood

# It's Cathy for Prime Minister!

An elite gathering of twenty-five Dorset Humanists attended a hustings event at the Elstead Hotel in Bournemouth to elect a new leader of the Humanist Party, currently enjoying a huge majority in the House of Commons, to become our next Prime Minister. Cathy Silman, a retired teacher and secretary of Dorset Humanists, swept to victory on a socially-conscious manifesto. Cathy triumphed over other contenders Daniel Dancey, Aaron Darkwood, and David Warden. President Biden and Rishi Sunak immediately phoned to congratulate Silman on her victory whilst Liz Truss refused to concede defeat. Cathy said, "I was absolutely amazed I won... However, I was pleased that Humanists are open to new ideas and new ways of looking at things."

*We are electing a leader of a Humanist Party, a party that truly believes that "equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world"... "We need to forge a cycle advancing the richness of human life rather than the richness of our economy in which humans live"*

*Cathy Silman, quoting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Amartya Sen, winner of the Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences*

## Cathy's Manifesto

1. Raise Universal Credit by at least £30 a week
2. Forbid all house building except council housing for next three years and aim to build at least 300,000 council properties a year
3. Repeal Planning Act preventing councils from using compulsory purchases orders to acquire land at current value
4. Introduce rent freeze and tax incentives for landlords offering affordable rents
5. Introduce land value taxes on (i) all foreign-owned UK property investments (£45bn property in London owned by overseas investors and UK wide they own 600,000 unoccupied homes); (ii) most landlords and second home owners; (iii) owner-occupiers of houses worth more than average for area
6. Ban most sales to non-owner-occupiers from now on.
7. Immediately introduce extremely low affordable rate for small amount of gas and electricity – sufficient for the health of family of four in 2-bed flat. Then market rate.
8. Nationalise the utility companies and add research and construction of more tidal, solar and hydrogen fuels.
9. Compulsory insulation standards for all homes new and old. If owner-occupied and worth less than the average for the area, this insulation will be paid for by the government.
10. Immediately set up Nightingale-type social care homes run by NHS to free up beds. Fund training of properly paid care assistants. As soon as possible merge social care and NHS.
11. Free training, child care and bursaries to requalify experienced health care assistants as nurses and for nurses to train as doctors.

## Cathy's recommended reading

*The Deficit Myth: Modern Monetary Theory and How to Build a Better Economy* (2020) by Professor Stephanie Kelton

*Capital in the Twenty-First Century* (2017) Thomas Piketty

*Generation Rent: Why You Can't Buy A Home (Or Even Rent A Good One)* (2020) Chloe Timperley

*Doughnut Economics: Seven Ways to Think Like a 21st-Century Economist* (2017) Kate Raworth

*Rethinking the Economics of Land and Housing* (2017) Josh Ryan-Collins et al

## Other policy proposals

Space does not permit us to publish the other three manifestos in full, but highlights include:

1. A Universal Basic Income of £9150 per person funded through a tax on wealth – on average 3% of wealth per person, per year, with most people paying much less than 3% (Daniel)
2. Reduce MPs salary to the national average, plus performance bonuses (Daniel)
3. Nationalise rail, energy, water and postage (Daniel)
4. Cannabis, LSD, mushrooms and MDMA to be legalised but regulated for quality and available only from licensed sellers (Daniel)
5. Replace old homes, outdated tower blocks, poorly insulated premises and buildings that are no longer fit for purpose through a programme of "demolish, transition, and build" (Aaron)
6. "Think Tank Britain" – everyone can forward ideas and initiatives through to the government (Aaron)
7. Aid delivery ships (Aaron)
8. Civil Assist Volunteers programme (Aaron)
9. ID Card (Aaron)



# Humanists International



*Andrew Copson, Chief Executive of Humanists UK and President of Humanists International, was unable to join us in person at this event in August because of a rail strike but he appeared via Zoom link from his home in the Midlands. Forty people attended in person with a few more joining us via Zoom. This is an edited transcript of Andrew's talk. To watch the full talk on YouTube click the image of Andrew.*

David Warden informed the audience that this was Andrew's sixth visit to Dorset Humanists since 2008 when he was Education Officer for the British Humanist Association (the old name for Humanists UK). Andrew said he always enjoys coming to Dorset – and was distressed to be missing the cream tea this year!

Andrew started by talking about the stabbing of Sir Salman Rushdie in New York the day before. Andrew's interview with Sky News is [here](#). Salman Rushdie is a [Patron](#) of Humanists UK.

We see more and more the opponents of freedom of expression, thought, and open democratic societies and humanist values resorting to violence and intimidation. Increasingly pressing to close down debate and intimidate people with their authoritarianism.

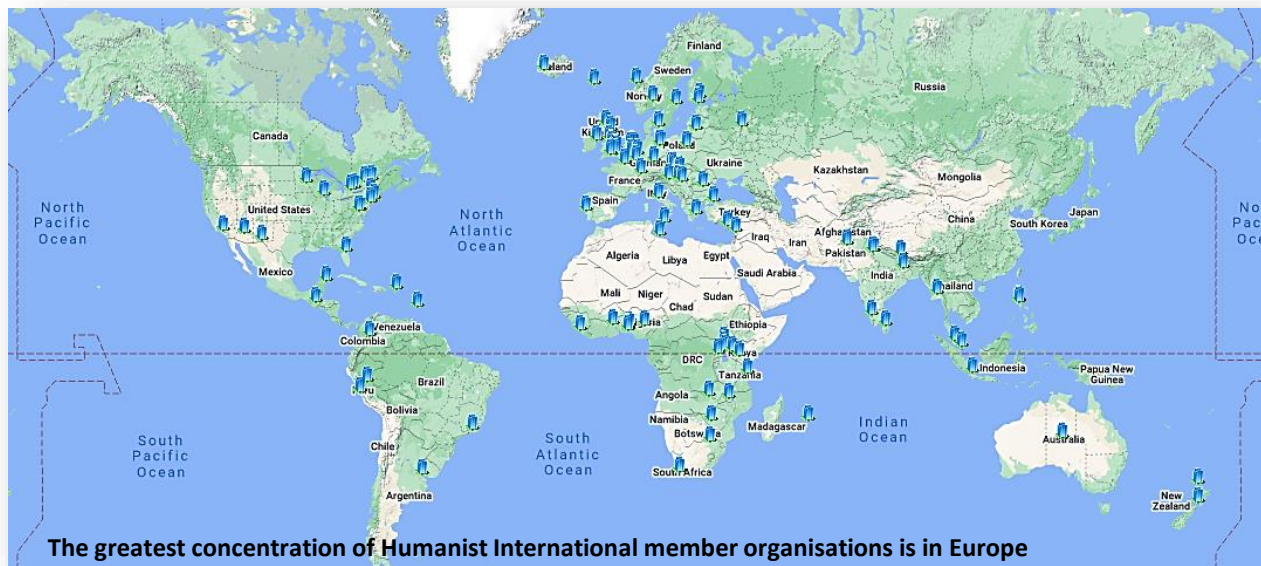
There are many other humanist organisations around the world – in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas. In some countries it's illegal to not be religious and if you are non-religious, especially if you leave a religion, you can be imprisoned or even killed. Humanists International is the global representative body of the humanist movement, uniting a variety of organisations including atheist and secularist organisations. It is made up of over 170 member organisations from 75 different countries.

Humanists International has four areas of work:

1. It campaigns to promote humanist values such as freedom and secularism
2. It advocates for humanists at the United Nations and other bodies such as the Human Rights Council in Geneva, the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, the [African Commission on Human and People's Human Rights](#), and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
3. It supports the growth of humanist organisations in the developing world as well as bringing more established humanist organisations together to share knowledge and expertise
4. It supports humanists at risk around the world – it has resources to support only a limited number at any one time – an obvious example is Mubarak Bala, President of Nigerian Humanists, who has been sentenced to 24 years in prison for some Facebook posts about Muhammad. Humanists International has been funding his legal team and supporting his family

There is a huge diversity of humanist organisations around the world – different sizes and different constitutional structures. In Belgium, for example, humanist workers are civil servants and paid by the state.





In other countries like Norway, they are state funded but they are Non-Governmental Organisations. In most countries they are entirely non-governmental – they are civil society organisations. In other countries they are underground networks trying to avoid the detection of the authorities because the expression of humanist beliefs is a crime. The Norwegian Humanist Association (Human-Etisk Forbund - HEF) is the largest humanist association in the world, with over 100,000 members. Those members constitute 1.9% of the national population of 5.42 million, making HEF by far the largest such association in the world in proportion to population. They've got a very sweet deal with the Norwegian state. They get state funding on the basis of equal treatment with the Lutheran state church. They get a per capita amount for each member. There's also dynamic humanist activity in India and the US and well as the UK. And the newest member organisations of Humanists International are in Barbados, Estonia, Malawi, Myanmar, Libya and Zimbabwe.

The greatest concentration of Humanist International member organisations is in Europe which is where, arguably, humanism started although some argue it started in India. You will also notice from the map the places where they aren't any humanist organisations – there's a ribbon from Mali in northwest Africa through to Pakistan. These

are the worst places in the world for human rights, democracy, and humanism. In many countries in this axis it is illegal to set up a humanist organisation although we might have some contacts in these countries.

***“...the newest member organisations of Humanists International are in Barbados, Estonia, Malawi, Myanmar, Libya and Zimbabwe.”***

Humanist organisations around the world can be plotted on a spectrum (see graphic on next page). Many organisations exist in a situation where they are fighting for acceptance, such as the Humanist Society of Pakistan, Indonesian Atheists, Arab Humanists, Iranian Humanists. Then shading into acceptance where their right to exist may be granted such as the Humanist Society of Mexico and Guatemala... organisations at this stage typically still find themselves in hostile and unequal environments and so the work they are often involved in is campaigning for secularism – the separation of religion and state and the removal of discrimination in law. This is the situation for humanists in Cyprus, Kenya, Ghana, Singapore and Ireland. When some of these goals have been achieved humanists will spend more time ▷

Promoting a **lifestance** ← Campaigning for **secularism** ← Fighting for **acceptance**



Humanist organisations around the world can be plotted on this spectrum

promoting a humanist approach to life itself, humanism as a worldview, our way of approaching our time in this life as a moral system as a framework that can be conducive to human welfare, fulfilment, personal happiness, social progress. This advocacy of humanism as opposed to fighting for acceptance you see in Scandinavia or the Low countries in Europe – Norway, the Netherlands, Iceland, Belgium, the American Humanist Association. Humanists UK is on the cusp between fighting for secularism and having the luxury of promoting a lifestance. This is an analytically useful way of looking at the diversity and positioning of humanist organisations around the world, [and the potential for progressing through the three stages]. We're not just a collection of vaguely liberal organisations. We do have a shared agenda.

## History

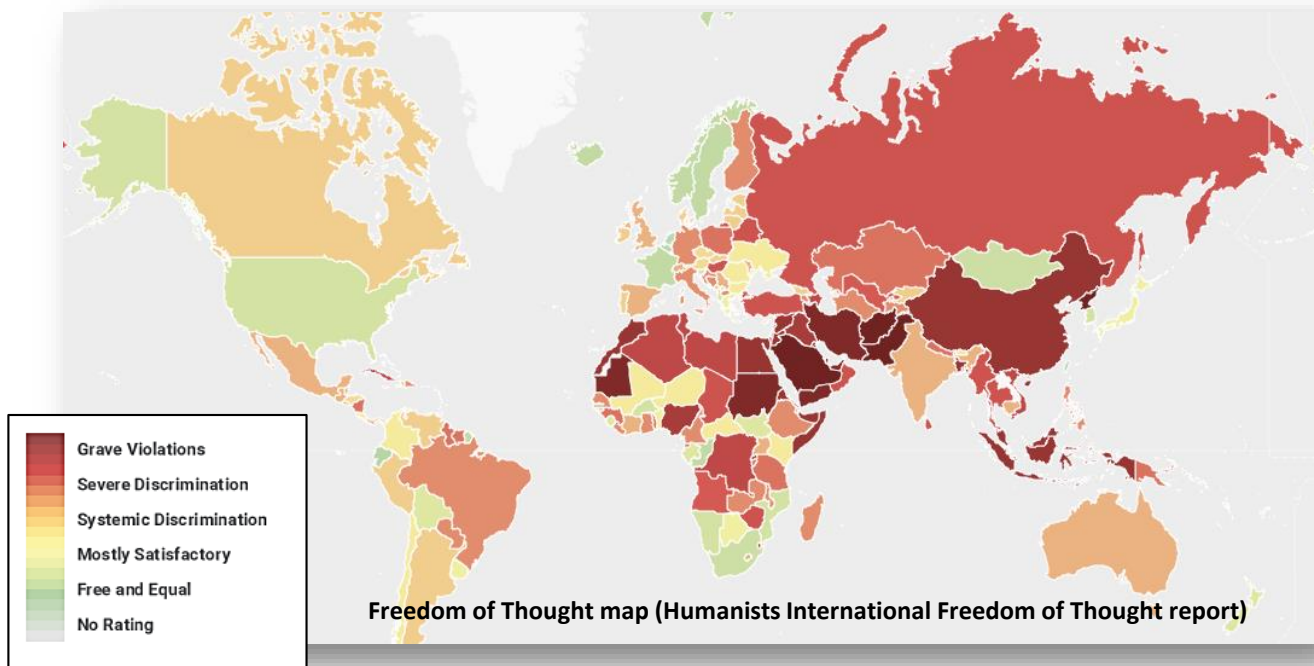
Humanists International was founded in 1952 as the International Humanist and Ethical Union (IHEU) in Amsterdam. There were some predecessor organisations. In the nineteenth century the Ethical movement which Humanists UK came out of – sort of, more or less – founded an International Ethical Union and in parallel to that there was something called the World Union of Freethinkers (WUFT) which was more involved in bringing together secularist and rationalist groups. But there was great overlap. For example, one of my predecessors Harold Blackham was still working for the International Ethical Union but in 1938 was also the organiser of WUFT International Congress held in Conway Hall

in London. 1938 was the last joint congress. They were very dependent on the resources of countries in Western Europe and in the course of the 1940s the movement was effectively destroyed either by the advance of Soviet Communism or by the growth of fascism and then the long recovery time for civil society institutions to be established. Humanist and atheist organisations were the first to be declared illegal by Adolf Hitler. In a speech at the end of his first year in power he said the Nazi Party had stamped out the scourge of atheist organisations for all time.

Harold Blackham and Jaap van Praag (a leading Dutch humanist) decided together with humanists from Africa, India, Austria and America, to establish a new organisation for international humanism. Julian Huxley was the first president of the International Humanist and Ethical Union. They adopted the Amsterdam Declaration as a definition of modern humanism and they gave their full approval to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). We now have board members from every continent. Gary McLelland is the current chief executive.

We're experiencing the most dynamic period of global growth than ever before but, at the same time, not only does the threat to freedom of religion and belief continue to grow but it continues to become ever more violent and vicious.

Seventy-two countries criminalise blasphemy or apostasy, with twelve having the death penalty: Afghanistan, Iran, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritania, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, UAE, and Yemen.



In countries like Indonesia and Egypt you are not allowed to state 'no religion' on your identity card.

Andrew encouraged his listeners to head over to the [Humanists International website](https://www.humanistsinternational.org/) to look at cases and case studies of humanists at risk.

## Humanist and non-religious asylum seekers

Humanists International at its General Assembly in Malta in 2016 announced that it wanted to work with national humanist organisations in order to find safe asylum for humanists at risk. Humanists UK answered that call and has worked on the development of an asylum support system in the UK. This work is difficult because there are blocks on recognition. For example, Pakistani humanist [Hamza bin Walayat](#) received death threats from his family after renouncing Islam. His original asylum claim was rejected by the Home Office because he didn't identify Plato and Aristotle as humanists. He was eventually granted asylum in the UK. It's hard to describe Plato as a humanist! This case betrayed a total ignorance of the nature and structure of non-religious beliefs by case handlers. Humanist beliefs are not doctrinal and do not require 'adherents' to manifest their beliefs in a predetermined way. ▷

***"In countries like Indonesia and Egypt you are not allowed to state 'no religion' on your identity card."***



## Pakistani humanist denied UK asylum after failing to identify Plato

Man who renounced Islam says he has received death threats from family members in Pakistan





There is no set way of life or doctrines that apostates have to follow. So the asylum system in the UK did not really know how to assess whether someone was a humanist or not. Humanists UK suggested some examples of how it could be done. Did the asylum seeker have a credible account of their journey from religion to non-religious belief, and their reasons for leaving their former religion? Had they stopped following the tenets of a religion such as attending a place of worship, fasting, or praying? And if they did follow some cultural practices, such as Eid or Christmas, this did not necessarily indicate that they were religious. Claimants were also being advised that they could return to their country of origin and behave 'discreetly'. But in many countries, religion is not a personal matter that can be opted out of discreetly and humanists should not be forced to hide their beliefs and act against their conscience. They wouldn't have said to Christian asylum seekers "Go back and pretend to be a Muslim". Not participating in religion is an important manifestation of humanist belief. Humanists UK was able to convince the Home Office to completely rewrite their asylum guidance and we provided training to every single assessor. And we have been able to set up our own service supporting humanist asylum claimants and so far we have had a hundred percent success rate in the thirty-odd cases that have been taken forward. And we rely on the information provided in the [Freedom of Thought Report](#) to help build a case for individual claimants.

### **The End Blasphemy Laws campaign**

This campaign began at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as an attempt to defeat a number of resolutions that were being promoted by Russia, China and the Islamic States which were attempting to create a new international norm that offending religious sentiment was discrimination on religious grounds. Eventually that resolution was defeated. The campaign then shifted attention to try and get 'dead letter' blasphemy laws abolished in Western

***"Humanists UK was able to convince the Home Office to completely rewrite their asylum guidance and we provided training to every single assessor."***

countries which has been very successful in Scotland, New Zealand, Spain and so on. The next stage is to tackle blasphemy laws where they are enforced.

■ ***After Andrew's talk we enjoyed a complimentary cream tea prepared by members of our committee and volunteers. Those present generously gave around £160 to our Annual Appeal for Hope for Food foodbank.***



Dorset Humanists Committee has agreed to continue supporting the local foodbank *Hope for Food* through our Annual Appeal in memory of former chair of Dorset Humanists, Jane Bannister. Last year, we donated £2,594 worth of food and toiletries to Hope for Food.

Hope for Food works on a referral system, and these are received from schools, social workers and healthcare workers for food hampers. Although predominantly these referrals are for families, the charity provides them to anyone for whom a referral is made. Please contact David Warden for details about how to make a donation. Phone: 07910 886629

Email: [chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk](mailto:chairman@dorsethumanists.co.uk)

# View from the Chair

David Warden  
*Chairman of Dorset Humanists*



Our 'Humanist Prime Minister' event convinced me that it is impossible to create a Humanist Party out of the philosophy of humanism. This is because humanists disagree on politics, which is how it should be in a healthy democracy. But humanism can help to inform an ethical 'politics of the common good'.

Aaron's manifesto, published in full on our Meetup site, is an impressive achievement covering everything from trade, energy, education, health, housing and the economy through to ambitious volunteering and civil assist programmes. I disagree with his insistence on reducing the debt and deficit because public debt as a percentage of GDP falls over time as a side-effect of inflation. It would fall further if we could promote economic growth, and in any case much of the government interest on borrowing is paid back into the economy. But these are complex discussions which require more debate. I also worry that his ID Card scheme would give the state too much scope for surveillance and control. He prompted an interesting discussion about modular housing – modern, affordable, prefabricated homes which could help to solve the housing crisis.

I'm interested in Daniel's proposal for a Universal Basic Income and this is something we need to look at in more depth. But funding it by taxing wealth at 3% is problematic. Let's say someone is living in a property worth £300,000 and has savings of £100,000 and a pension of £12,500. Daniel's tax would require them to find £12,000 a year in order to pay the tax. If their home was exempt, they would still have to find £3,000 a year to give to people doing nothing. But if they too are eligible for the UBI they would get £9,150 back! We need some more details about how this would work in practice.

In her summing up speech, Cathy said that some people in the past and now "...see Britain as a country that took advantage of its power to plunder resources from around the world and built its wealth on it... I think we need to work towards being seen as a country that stands for fairness and an aid giver. Consider the drought throughout the Horn of Africa at the moment. The people there are facing starvation. If you were starving wouldn't you try to earn a living to save your family even if it entailed an extremely dangerous boat journey to England? There is no such thing as an illegal immigrant. I want to be a Prime Minister based on humanist principles of fairness for the whole world and not be seen any longer as Rule Britannia". To my mind, this illustrates the main intellectual flaw in socialism – the idea that wealth is like a vault of gold to be divvied up fairly. The answer to drought and food shortages is not for everyone to get in a boat and come to Europe. But again, these are complex discussions which require more debate.

Our contestants put a lot of work and thought into this stimulating and informative exercise and I'm sure we will revisit many of the themes and ideas raised. We may not be able to set up a new Humanist Party (several already exist in different countries) but we can play our part by being informed and engaged citizens.