

THE COMMITTEE

By Rod

Loosely based on Acts 15 vv 1 – 35, the Council at Jerusalem, which ended in a compromise letter sent round to the churches. Here is a classic committee – unable to decide clearly on anything.

ANY HISTORICAL ACCURACY IN THIS SKETCH IS PURELY ACCIDENTAL!

CAST – all characters can be male or female. Choose suitable names.

Chair Stickler for correct form.

Secretary Subservient supporter of Chair.

Len Stroppy character. Hates formality.

Mary Friend of Len..

Nick Strong character. Tends to oppose Len.

Olive Friend of Nick. Mousey.

Committee are sitting round in a semi-circle. Chair in centre with Secretary on his right. Len and Mary on one side and Nick and Olive on the other. There is quite a hubbub. The Chairman (Or woman!) struggles to gain control.

Chair Order, order. Thank you. I call this meeting of the Jerusalem Highways and Byways Committee to order. First things first – so we need to sort out refreshments for after the meeting. *[Turning to Len]* Len, tea or coffee?

Len Tea for me. I can't stand that new fangled coffee muck. White with two sugars.

Mary I agree with Len. White tea with one sugar.

Nick White tea for me too but with no sugar.

Olive Definitely tea but black with no sugar. I'm watching my weight.

Chair I'll have white coffee with no sugar. So that leaves our secretary. *[Looks at secretary]*

Secretary Ooh, white coffee with no sugar for me too Mr Chair.

Chair OK, let me sum up. We have one vote for white tea with two sugars, one for white tea with one sugar, one for white tea with no sugar and one for black tea with no sugar. But we have two votes for white coffee with no sugar. That's a clear majority; so the motion is carried. White coffee with no sugar all round it is. *[Turning to Olive]* Olive, could you please let the caterers know we want six white coffees with no sugar? *[Olive nips off stage and comes back. Rest of committee murmur their disapproval]*

Right, can we now turn to our first agenda item – Apologies For Absence. *[Looks up]* Do we have any? *[Pause. Silence]* It appears not so ...

Len *[Interrupting]* There wouldn't be would there?

Chair Why not?

Len Well, how do you expect anyone to apologise for their absence? They're not exactly going to say, "I'm sorry, I'm not here". It's a daft question if you ask me. *[Looks to Mary for support]*

Mary Yes, it's like asking, "Anyone not here please raise their hand". *[All committee members laugh – much to annoyance of Chair. Secretary starts by joining in with laughter but stops when notices that Chair is irritated]*

Chair *[Frostily]* Can we move on to Agenda Item Number Two? And can I remind members of the committee to address their remarks through the Chair?

So, 'Minutes Of The Last Meeting'. I hope you all received your copy and ...

Nick *[Interrupting]* I didn't. *[Looks at Olive for support]*

Olive Nor me. *[Len and Mary join in along same lines. Chair looks at Secretary for explanation]*

Secretary Mr Chair, I'm afraid we had a few problems. The copier is broken.

Chair What part is broken?

Secretary His right arm. It appears he broke it playing for Jerusalem FC 4th eleven. So I have had to make alternative arrangements; but I do now have copies for everyone. *[These are handed around. Members start to study them]* I apologise for the delay.

Chair Are we happy to accept these as a true record of our last meeting?

Len I don't understand the first line.

Chair *[Strongly]* Please address your remarks through the Chair.

Len Very well. *[Picks up his chair and speaks through it]* The first line reads: "Meeting held in the year ILAD." What is that supposed to mean?

Chair *[Exasperated]* It's the date using the new Roman system.

- Secretary Yes, *[Looking to Chair for permission which is granted with a nod]* if I may Mr Chair, IL is 49 in Roman numerals and AD stands for Anno Domini. It's a way of fixing the year based on Jesus being born in 1 AD.
- Mary But that's not mathematically correct is it. His year of birth should be 0 AD. So this year's date should be 48 AD. That is IILAD. *[Len and Mary mutter in agreement with each other]*
- Nick But I've heard He was actually born 6 years earlier. So the date should be 55 AD. That is LVAD.
- Olive Or 54 AD if you count from 0 AD. That is LIVAD. *[Nick and Olive mutter in agreement with each other]*
- Chair *[Desperately]* OK. Can we change the first line to read: "Meeting held in the year ILAD or IILAD or LVAD or LIVAD, depending on which dating system you choose to use"?
- Secretary Yes, Chair. I've got all that.
- Chair Are we now happy to accept these minutes? *[Murmurs of agreement]* All in favour. *[All raise hand]* Any against? *[Noone is]* Motion carried. Item Three: are there any matters arising? *[No response]* Good, in that case we will move on to the main agenda item, Number Four. *[Looking at Nick]* Nick, I believe that this was your proposal.
- Nick *[Rising to his feet]* Yes, thank you Mr Chair. I would like to table a proposal that we change from driving on the left on our roads in Jerusalem to driving on the right. This is much more in fitting with the modern era. We've got to move with the times of Roman rule. In Latin the very word for left, sinister, indicates how strange this ancient custom has become. It's high time we in Jerusalem fitted in with the rest of the Roman Empire. *[Sits down]*
- Len *[Springing to his feet. Pointedly looking at Chair]* Mr Seat, I disagree most strongly. We would be throwing out centuries of glorious tradition – and for what benefit? None that I can see. *[Sits down]*
- Olive *[Standing]* Mr Sofa, could I propose a compromise. We could allow people either to drive on the left or to drive on the right. They could choose for themselves. *[Sits. Confers with Nick who seems happy with this proposal]*
- Mary *[Standing]* Yes, Mr Chaiselongue, I would second that proposal – provided it was for a trial period only. Perhaps one year would be sufficient. We would then have time to weigh up the benefits of both

systems, set against each other, before making a more informed final decision. *[Sits. Confers with Len who seems happy with this proposal]*

Chair Let me see if I've got this right. The proposal is that we publish a proclamation allowing people to drive either on the right or on the left – for a trial period of one year.

Secretary Yes, Mr Chair, you've summarised our position beautifully. I reckon it's brilliant. As a committee we will be seen to be honouring this city's fine traditions while, at the same time, being forward thinking in outlook. It's a real winner.

Chair Good. All those in favour of the proposal. *[All vote in favour]* Any against? *[Noone is]* The motion is carried unanimously. There being no other business *[Looks around in case there is. There isn't.]* I declare this meeting closed. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, I think this has been a really successful meeting. Well done everybody. *[General murmurs of agreement]*

THE END