

Day 4: Darlington to Northallerton

Very different day I suppose is the only way to describe today's march. After setting out and having gone just a few miles, we realised that a lot of the route was not walkable as it was busy country roads, and we all know about health and safety ;-)
So, there was a lot of sitting around or being ferried in small groups in our battle bus (the van). Not a problem for those of us who are for the long march- and have all the time- but very disappointing for the day marchers, but eh that is life. The original Jarrow marchers did not have to worry about such things.

Had very interesting discussions about why people walk/march and do these things matter? Also how you walk- are you a 'talker' or 'thinker' on such walks in groups? One of my favourite poems is by Robert Browning Hamilton:

"I walked a mile with pleasure

She chatted all the way

But left me none the wiser

For all she had to say.

I walked a mile with sorrow

And never a word said she

But oh! The things I learnt from her

When sorrow walked with me."

I am personally a thinking walker and like to use the time to reflect and think things through. I was given this quote by Malcolm Philp recently: "All truly great thoughts are conceived while walking." - Friedrich Nietzsche. Not quite sure about having had any great thoughts but I do find the time very valuable. The one personal challenge is that my thinking is very inward focused, and so I miss out on appreciating the moment/surroundings! Something my wife and family know only too well – honest I do not do it intentionally!

Ofcourse, people march for different reasons. One of the books that I found fascinating recently was the "The unlikely pilgrimage of Harold Fry" by Rachel Joyce – which not only shows motivations but also the dynamics during such walks. Being together with 'strangers' for long periods – and try sleeping on floors in halls - is a very interesting experience and I thoroughly recommend it, it could even be made mandatory for bureaucrats and politicians!

Had some interesting discussions about whether such walks/marches make a difference, and again it depends on viewpoints. Having thought that the original Jarrow marchers were unsuccessful in getting their demands (requests) fulfilled, the march clearly influenced the electorate and led to the Labour Government and the start of the welfare state, according to Pat McCourt yesterday. And so, it may not

have the impact that was intended directly, but it can affect change indirectly – and so there has to be an element of doing such things altruistically. Another quote perhaps puts it better: “But the beauty is in the walking -- we are betrayed by destinations” - Gwyn Thomas. And in the spirit of the Hindu Holy book, The Gita, One must do what is right without expecting any rewards.

And so people march, and certainly there are many reasons to walk for the NHS. Jude Kirton-Darling, the north east Labour MEP, who has been with us for last 4 days (impressing) felt that activism/marches do matter and are taken seriously by the politicians, and quoted the 38 degrees and Countryside Alliance and pointed out that it was such efforts that stopped the sales of woodlands and Caroline Spelman, the then Environment Secretary ended up saying sorry. So, she thinks the Coalition should be afraid of the Darlomums, and take this march seriously; whether it is a real threat (I hope it is) or wishful thinking, time will tell! I do hope that some Coalition MPs will join us; I am not party political but I see/hear a lot from Labourites and would really like to get the other side also.

Talking of books, fellow walker, Trish Foley, mentioned “Harry’s last stand- How the World My Generation Built is Falling Down, and What We Can Do to Save it” by Harry Leslie Smith, as a must read.

We are being hosted by the Northallerton Forum tonight – who laid out a splendid tea (totally undeserved, as little walking but did not stop me- yummy cupcakes), and there is a showing of Michael More’s Sicko tonight. And I managed to get a shower-heaven.

So we keep talking and we keep walking, enjoying each other’s company, learning new things about life, self, and I am certainly the better for all this. So, thank you my fellow walkers, and all the supporters.



With Jude Kirton-Darling

Rajan Madhok

19 August 2014

DECLARATION: I am walking in personal capacity and the views expressed are mine alone, and are meant to inform not criticise or insult. If you like them, tell others and if you do not, tell me- just kidding, but do help me with my prejudices/arrogance. I may be old but can still learn. Blogs available at www.leadershipforhealth.com