

A Dog Whistle Tale

It was a freezing cold Sunday morning and Sandy was standing at the village bus stop with his dog Buddy. The Sunday bus service is only every hour and it was already 10 minutes late. His mind was still buzzing with all the injustices that had just been aired on the Andrew Marr Show when he heard the bus coming. You can always hear it before it comes round the corner. He got as far as asking for a ticket, then the driver leaned over, looked up the bus;

“You cannae get on - there’s a dug already on the bus”

Back on the pavement all thoughts of Andrew Marr vanished in the face of this new injustice. As Martin Luther King Jr once said, ‘Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.’

The sense of injustice only heightened as it dawned on him that there was no guarantee he would get on the next bus either. He did, but when he got to the next village, a woman with her dog was refused. “Sorry - there’s a dog on already”

The driver pointed in the direction of Sandy and Buddy. It seems all the drivers had had the memo. When Sandy got home, the first thing he did was look up the Stagecoach ‘rules for carriage’. The only reference to dogs was this - “One accompanied, well-behaved dog which will not be a danger or a nuisance for other customers or our staff is allowed to travel with you on our buses at the discretion of the driver.” That could be a description of his Buddy and no mention at all of ‘one dog per bus’.

Perhaps he should have

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“No other bus operat

engers is already

covered by rules about driver discretion and the need for dogs to be under the owners’ control at all times; and, in any case, the rule doesn’t say what you think it says.”

Three days later Sandy got a reply from Stagecoach’s ‘Head of Rebuttal of Emails from Grumpy Old Men’ (or something like that) setting out the research and careful data analysis on which their policy was based. Well what she actually said was

“I was once on a bus where two dogs started to fight “ (obviously not a Stagecoach bus).

That should have been it, but the words of the late Dr King were still ringing in his ears “Injustice to a dog anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere” (he may have paraphrased slightly). To be honest Buddy hadn’t seemed that bothered about being put off the bus - just slightly bemused at why the trip had been so short. Sandy was the one left seething. No, he wasn’t going to let it drop. Perhaps a letter to his MSP?

He had got as far as describing how stressed, helpless, drained, frustrated, angry, exasperated and excluded he felt, when he began to smile to himself. “I bet he’ll think I’m writing about Brexit”.