U3A Shrewsbury
Café Society Group

Monday 2nd July 2018
The Lion Hotel

Summary

o Introduction

There were plenty of members of the Café Society group present at this meeting. Apologies had been received from Harold B. A 'best wishes' card for Denise M was signed by the group and kindly organised by Viv B. Thank you to Margaret H for organising the drinks order in Phil K's absence.

A summary of the meeting's discussions follows.

Mike S

o Discussion Topics

Has international tourism reached a climactic point?

- The group felt that this topic primarily related to cruise ship and air travel
- When asked to define the problems caused by a climactic point of international tourism, the responses were:
    o Overcrowding (Venice was quoted as a prime example)
    o Environmental damage (as part of the travel as well as to the destination resort)
- Better management was suggested as the overall solution in addressing this issue
- A huge increase in tourists travelling from China was mentioned as a relatively new factor adding to the situation
- The question of tourism regulation was raised and who should be responsible for applying regulations or restrictions (should this be done at a local, national or international level?)
- Members who had travelled through villages in Nepal gave complimentary reports about the collection of donations at a local level to support the immediate communities
- From a philosophical point of view, the group widely agreed that travel broadens the mind (whereas 'mass tourism narrows the mind'), although it was stressed that travel is a form of education and that it is perfectly possible to learn about different cultures and regions without personally travelling to such locations
- One member of the group reinforced this belief, stating it was unhelpful to generalise tourists as visiting over 90 different countries around the world had 'deeply enriched their own life'
- Tourism was thought be unhelpful in sensitive regions like The Galapagos Islands (and Antarctica)
- It was questioned if the individual could be left responsible to determine what form of tourism is acceptable but group members seemed to feel that laws and regulation would become necessary
- Carbon footprints (of flights and cruise ships) were discussed together with suggestions that governments step up taxes on the fuels involved with these types of transportation

- At a local level, it was noted that booking bed and breakfast accommodation in Shrewsbury during the summer was a difficult task (due to lack of availability) and it was reported that the Premier Inn at Shrewsbury was the most lucrative branch in the country
- Disapproval was expressed towards the culture of oversees hen and stag holidays. It was understood that it might be lucrative and profitable for destination resorts but it was felt that it portrayed a very negative image
- A group member summarised the climax of the problem as being the result of the opposing forces of wanting to profit and make money, and wanting to improve the environment and the community

Is a two-tier society being created by IT?

- 'Yes', was the immediate and overwhelming response
- The group felt that they were directly affected by this issue and that it was a result of recent changes in technology and the different influences upon those that grew up with such technology and those that did not
- It was pointed out that the new form of state benefit (Universal Credit) could only be applied for online but the group members didn't blame the government or companies for switching to electronic methods (online and email) as it was undeniably easier, quicker and more efficient
- Some members of the group expressed their distrust or dislike of electronic banking methods and were not in favour of the reduction of bank branches
- Over members of the group expressed a fondness and liking of new forms of communication available with family members overseas (email, video chat, etc)
- It was pointed out that over history, there has always been communication divisions as technology advances. There were those who couldn't read and write, there was a time when only one household in the street had a telephone. It was further pointed out that technology itself has its own shelf-life (e.g. video recorders, cheque books)
- The question was raised as to whether technological advancements are always a good thing. Do we have to embrace all the gimmicks that become available? Do we really need social media?
- Within the younger generations, it was wondered whether a two-tier society was being created by parents who could afford to provide technology (phones, computers and the internet) to their children at home and those that couldn't. Do those children that still have to use libraries and public facilities suffer as a consequence?
- A member of the group thought it was only important for individuals to embrace the technology they actually wanted or needed to use rather than to feel they had to learn everything about all the new technological offerings that come along

If you were forced to wear a tattoo, what would it be?

- It was correctly pointed out that if a person was forced to have a tattoo, it would be unlikely that they would have any choice as to what it would be
- No group member felt the desire to have a tattoo and thus suggestions like 'a full stop on the sole of my foot' were the preferred answers

Is it time for cash to disappear?

- 'No', was the immediate and overwhelming response
- It was widely felt that cash made it easier to keep tabs on how much you are spending
- Experiments into cashless societies in Norway were mentioned but the group didn't have any information about whether these schemes were successful
- When asked 'who would benefit from a cashless society?', the group seemed to think that banks would be the only benefactors, although they thought cashless methods might help reduce black market activity
- One group member thought that the production of small change was pointless and expressed a particular loathing towards 'brown coins'

- When asked about the future and whether our society would at some point become cashless, the group seemed to believe it was inevitable
- Alternate systems to money were discussed. Examples of villages and communities trying out systems of bartering and favours were mentioned although much success was not reported. The Severn Local Exchange Trading Scheme (LETS) was quoted as a local example, which uses 'Shews' tokens for bartering and exchanging services. Further research showed that this scheme appears to have become redundant
- New electronic currencies (like Bitcoin and Oyster cards) were mentioned
- Members of the group were encouraged to shop locally and 'put their money where their house is'

Is the dismantling of nuclear weaponry in North Korea a believable proposition?

- The wording of the topic was immediately brought into question as the group members didn't feel they had enough information to know whether the country of North Korea even possessed nuclear weaponry. It was therefore suggested that the group discussed the topic of, 'Are two separate Korean countries a viable long-term situation?'
- It was explained that the continued existence of North Korea was very delicate and artificial as it is both heavily sanctioned and relies on subsidies
- Some group members thought that neighbouring countries (namely China) had no interest in North Korea whereas others thought that China might be the key to dispersing the North Korean regime
- With the lure of western society, particularly the relative freedom offered in South Korea, it was generally thought that North Korea would not last for more than a few decades as a fortress state and that a 'United Korea' would eventually be formed
- The current football world cup competition was mentioned as being a positive force with regards to international cooperation and unification

o Future Topics

The group spent the last 10 minutes of the session agreeing upon questions for discussion at the next meeting. Below is the list of topics that have been chosen. Hot topical issues should be emailed to the group coordinator prior to the next meeting.

- What is the official definition of poverty?
- Is it morally right for Israelis to shoot unarmed Palestinian protesters?
- What would be a suitable job for Trump?
- Am I my brother's keeper (with regards to refugees)?
- Should mobile phones be banned in schools?
- Should skirts be banned in schools so that all students wear trousers?
- Where is our civilisation now, politically speaking?
- Water shortage in India is spreading. Will this be the most important worldwide concern?
- Should we be actively reducing the world's population?
- What is your most embarrassing moment?
- Is mindfulness useful or abusive?
- Should the NHS stop using homeopathy and other so-called alternative treatments?

o Next Meeting

The next Café Society meeting will be on **Monday 6th August 2018** at 10.00am at The Lion Hotel (Tudor Bar room).