



Monday 1st October 2018
The Lion Hotel

Summary

o Introduction

There were 14 members of the Café Society group present at this meeting. No apologies were announced.

The mandatory contribution scheme of £1.50 per attending member was introduced and the money and drinks order were kindly collected and organised by Margaret H.

A summary of the meeting's discussions follows.

Mike S

o Discussion Topics

Should the Preston Three be regarded as public nuisances and criminals or political prisoners and heroes?

- *This was a last-minute topic introduced by Tim D, in reference to the Guardian news article: www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/sep/26/anti-fracking-activists-jailed-for-blackpool-cuadrilla-protest*
- Attention was drawn to the obscure nature of the 'public nuisance' charge brought against the defendants in the case
- Although some members of the group were aware of this news item, it was generally felt that this story had not been given much attention in the media
- The group realised that there were a number of issues at stake but that the primary concern revolved around the right to protest, the acceptable ways of protesting and the legal response in situations when lines are crossed
- Other examples of legal proceedings against protesters were mentioned including:
 - o [The Seeds of Hope East Timor Ploughshares \(1996\)](#)
 - o [The Greenpeace action at Maidstone Power Station \(2007\)](#)
 - o [The End Deportation runway action at Stanstead airport \(2017\)](#)
- A member of the group posed the ironic question, "Was the fracking company (Cuadrilla) charged for public nuisance or criminal damage?"
- A group member asked the rhetoric question, "What is the correct way to protest against the government?". No obvious answers were provided and it was generally agreed that it was very difficult to protest effectively. Many members said that they would be willing to make their voice heard but were unlikely to risk the threat of legal action. There was a suggestion that any custodial sentences could be 'time-shared' by volunteers from the public.
- Some group members felt that this case of the Preston Three demonstrates the level of corruption and lack of independence in the judiciary system
- It was agreed that the custodial sentences awarded in this case were inappropriate

Should car-use be rationed (e.g. to a family/house size) and should it be forbidden in the town centre?

- The group questioned whether just the use of private cars should be rationed, as the current problems are the result of all motor traffic
- Other towns and cities with traffic reduction policies were mentioned, including York and Chester. Policies that alternately blocked access according to registration plates were also quoted, and Cambridge University was cited as imposing restrictions on students
- Most members of the group felt a good public transport system was the proper solution to most traffic problems
- It was pointed out that previous demands for local traffic-reduction had resulted in the pedestrianisation of Pride Hill, although calls to pedestrianise High Street had failed
- The local bus service was heavily criticised, particularly with regards to the lack of coverage during evenings and Sundays
- It was felt that commerce should be encouraged to join the demand better bus services rather than focus their opinions on parking and vehicle access
- Domestic and street parking was highlighted as a growing issue, particularly in terraced streets like the Cherry Orchard area of Shrewsbury
- Pollution was also highlighted and understood to be a major concern in Shrewsbury town centre
- It was pointed out that (unlike with previous generations) people do not, by and large, live within walking distance of their places of work and often have no choice of transport other than a private car
- It was recognised that there are many bodies able to impose traffic-reduction schemes (government, local authorities, companies, schools, etc) but it was agreed that such policies were tricky to implement fairly or effectively

Should organ donation be opt-in or opt-out?

- A member of the group began this topic with a personal experience of being contacted for permission to use the organs of a loved-one, on the day after the death. The group member felt that the loved-one would have been very pleased to have extended or improved the life of stranger
- It was understood that Wales currently operates an opt-out system, where relatives can override the decision and that England currently operates an opt-in system but that relatives are routinely contacted if a possible donor case occurs
- The group was asked if there were any reasonable objections to a donor request. If surviving relatives are happy for a loved-one's body to be burned or buried in a box, could they really dislike the prospect of the body being put to better use?
- It was noted that religious beliefs might be a barrier to organ donation
- (At least) One group member commented that, upon looking in the mirror, they don't particularly think that their body should be resurrected in any way
- Most members of the group thought that there was a lack of clarity and direction about organ donation in that most people don't know what the legalities are, where everybody stands, what happens automatically and what (if anything) people need to do
- Members of the group who had some experience of cases where bodies had been donated to medical research pointed out that bodies are not legally returned for a typical duration of two years
- Only one member of the group expressed a preference for opt-in system with regards to organ donation

Do you feel you are English, British or European?

- The group had difficulty pinning-down the nature of this question. To give an appropriate answer, it would be necessary to understand what the questioner was wishing to know (where were you born?, where do you live?, what is your culture?, who issues your passport?, etc)
- Many members of the group said that they would reply to this question by saying they were a member of the human race, a global citizen, or from Yorkshire born and bred
- Some members of the group believed that nationalism, patriotism and certainly jingoism were inherently dangerous qualities. One member vividly remembered a geography lesson from their schooldays when a map of The British Empire on the wall was pointed at and the class was instructed to be proud of spreading their culture. "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel" (Samuel Johnson)
- The group members did not doubt the intensity felt by people who are fond of a country they were born in or lived in, or fond of a particular culture, tradition or way of life.
- Some members thought that In the modern world of travel and communication, it is absurd for someone to believe they belong to a country in the same way as belonging to a tribe, a town or a county in England. "How can you *feel* like a country? What *is* such a feeling?"
- A member of the group made the point that they do not wish to be held responsible for the historic actions of the country they live in and this led to the formulation of a future topic for further discussion
- Only one member of the group said that they would respond to the question by saying "English"

Is there a safe alcohol limit?

- The group did not have much to say in response to this topic. Was the question related to health or behaviour?
- It was noted that the recommended intake has slightly declined over the years but equally that The Daily Mail (and The Daily Express) like to have 'a scare a day'
- A group member pointed out that a safe limit depends entirely upon the individual. Most normal people tend to enjoy or benefit from relaxing properties of alcohol in moderation, whereas alcoholics should not consume any at all
- It was generally thought that the teaching with regards to alcohol has remained pretty much the same for a long time

Should gambling be advertised?

- It was agreed that there is far too much advertising by the gambling industry and a particular concentration on sporting events was observed
- Some group members suggested that introductory offers and incentives should be banned
- Gambling adverts were noted to be rather repetitive and it was explained that 'nagging' was a proven advertising technique
- It was proposed that gambling was the entire basis of capitalism
- Although no group members were in favour of gambling advertisements, nobody felt strongly that they should be banned just because they personally disapproved of the product. Alcohol and tobacco are considered harmful but such products are still advertised and the same goes for cream cakes

Should food sizes be dictated by government?

- No. The group felt that this issue was the responsibility of the restaurant and catering trade

Should we throw away our televisions?

- Several members of the group said that they do not watch broadcasted (live) television and two members of the group did not currently own a television. One member of the group only used their television for viewing YouTube / TED videos
- Some members felt that deliberately not having a television was like burning books or refusing to visit the library. Isn't it better to have the choice and option to watch things?
- Other members of the group highlighted the education that television has provided and reminded us of the ignorance of people before the invention of radio and television

○ 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.

- Has the BBC lost its way?
- Where is our nation now, politically speaking?
- Should the next Labour leader be a female?
- Should our country keep apologising for its actions in the past?
- Should we have a people's vote on Brexit?
- Should we be re-wilding parts of our country?
- Are we being pressurised into paying online?
- Is lying ever justified?

○ Next Meeting

The next Café Society meeting will be on **Monday 5th November 2018** at 10.00am at The Lion Hotel (Tudor Bar room).

