



Monday 2nd March 2015
The Lion Hotel

Minutes

- **Apologies**

Ken, Joy, Marilyn and Libby sent their apologies.

- **Matters Arising**

There were 14 people attending today – 5 of whom are new members. When we broached the prickly subject of splitting into two groups, it was decided that the newest members would first of all approach the other U3A discussion group to see if there is space for them to join. If not, they will form a new group under the leadership of Bridie Halton. When a decision has been made, Bridie will let Vivienne know what the new arrangements will be. The new members involved so far are:

Fran Osborn, Wendy Carter, Bridie Halton, Jackie Rooney, Jean Jones

That leaves a possible 16 members on the 'books' of the Café Society, which is already a lot, so future new members will be allocated to Bridie and the possible new group.

- **Discussion Topics**

A short summary of the subjects and discussions follows:

Should Charlie Hebdo have published those cartoons?

- When the cartoonists were shot by the terrorists, there was an outcry for freedom of speech, but soon, principally from religious leaders, we were all asked to respect others' beliefs and not wittingly to offend them. Everyone one felt at ease with this injunction as that is how we all would behave, we said, if asked to dinner in a social group. However, we also felt that the potential 'offendee' must also follow the rule of not imposing his beliefs on anyone else.
- When we considered more public forums, however, this policy did not hold water. For years, our Christian-type religions have been lampooned and ridiculed – to humorous effect by Monty Python, Dave Allan and others.
- Indeed, in our culture, nothing is sacred – politicians included. It is when targeting other cultures when we are confused – or frightened into silence. Salman Rushdie certainly paid for his lampooning of Islam – as did the British taxpayer, in order to protect him from revengeful Islamists. This is surely censorship by fear and nobody does this better than the extreme fundamentalist fanatics in Isis.

- Furthermore, discussion or ridicule resulting from free speech is the only tool with which to sensibly distil the fors and againsts of a particular law or belief. If nobody dare say anything against any belief or law then any falsity may never be unmasked.
- So it was concluded that in public, free speech must always prevail whilst in private and on a personal level, respect for the other should be uppermost.

Is our generation as good as it gets?

- We readily acknowledged that the younger generation, now in their teens, twenties and even thirties are laden with student debts, joblessness or poorly-paid jobs. Things are very good for us regarding a reasonable steady income we know will go on till we die, houses we own and opportunities to enjoy life.
- It was soon pointed out to us that we are a privileged group – probably university educated with a good pension after a pleasant job, but not all retirees enjoy this level of comfort. There are plenty struggling to heat the house or even buy food.
- The economic circle goes round, said Phil, and soon we'll be experiencing better circumstances – we've seen it after WW11 and in the 1920s (well, not us, but our parents). We don't need to feel too sorry for the youngsters, things will change for the better.
- Pam thought things are more likely to get consistently better because knowledge is so accessible these days –you can't keep the peasants in ignorance, if not treated well enough, they will be revolting!
- In any case, we felt we have deserved the comfort we have and even that is not perfect. There was a call for help in alleviating loneliness in older people and more money spent on mental health. It is said that the last two years of life are the most difficult – to say nothing of the last five minutes.

What is the point of holidays?

- First the bad news. Holidays are stressful: all that getting clothes ready, applying for visas/foreign money/insurance/credit cards, worrying about the times of flights/airsickness/ whether holiday wardrobe is up to scratch... then you arrive at the exotic destination ready for a cultural education and the first thing you see is a Kentucky Fried Chicken café!
- Yes, the 17C and 18C rich young men had a wonderful time being 'educated' in frivolous parts of Europe, and it is wonderful if you do get to see another way of living, or exotic animals, but maybe not so nice seeing utter poverty you can do little about except be hounded by beggars.
- In retirement, a change is as good as a rest. A holiday breaks the quietness of home life, and change is what we need in retirement. Apparently, the older you are when you retire, the quicker you die.
- Cruises are over-rated according to our members. They present themselves as a cheap holiday and then charge for single cabins, every step off the boat has apparently to be paid for. Mind you, if you are looking for a bit of nooky, cruises are your best bet (says anonymous member) and what is more, if you are a presentable gentleman of a certain age – you can go free as an 'escort'.

- Book that cruise now!
- Discussion Topics for the Next Meeting
The subjects up for discussion at our next meeting (April 2015) will be:
 - **What privacies would we be prepared to give up in return for safety?**
 - **Should we re-introduce Grammar Schools?**
and time permitting...
 - **Is positive discrimination ever a good thing?**

In preparation for the first discussion topic, members are encouraged to watch the documentary film '*Citizenfour (2014)*', charting the movements of Edward Snowden during the summer of 2013. The film can currently be viewed on the Channel 4 website or downloaded:

Watch:

<http://www.channel4.com/programmes/citizenfour/on-demand/58860-001>

Download:

<https://onedrive.live.com/redirect?resid=eccb863fb683ec43!20829&authkey=!AC4YrRj3G0pAGUE&ithint=video%2cavi>

- Date of Next Meeting
The next meeting will be held on (Bank Holiday) **Monday 6th April 2015 at 1000hrs** at **The Lion Hotel**.

Web Links

[Shrewsbury U3A Website](#)

[Café Discussion Webpage](#)

[Shrewsbury U3A Facebook Group](#)

