



Monday 3rd October 2016
The Lion Hotel

Minutes

○ Introduction

Marilyn, Ken and Mike H sent their apologies.

12 members were present.
Coffee and tea now costs £1.50.

○ Discussion Topics

A short summary of the subjects and discussions follows:

Should we disestablish the Church of England?

- Pam introduced the topic with a succinct view of most people growing up in the latter half of the 20th century. Her family were not religious and yet she was told by her parents to write 'C of E' on any official form as C of E covered a multitude of sins (as it were). All the weekly assemblies at her school included Christian worship and right up to this day, Religious Education is the only school subject obliged to be taught in law. Pam was required to marry in a church, whether she was a believer or not. Add to that, the injustice of C of E religious leaders having a seat in Parliament and finally, the fact that the Church of England has as its head, the Queen (who is a woman, and was head of the church when no women were allowed to be priests), and we have a situation way out of kilter with modern rationale
- Nevertheless, a few members were happy that RE is a compulsory school subject, so long as all the world religions are taught (or at least explained)
- A comparison was made with the official status of religion in France, where RE is NOT allowed to be taught, religion is meant to be kept private, marriages are obliged to take place in the Mayor's office, as representative of the State and not a church (although a second ceremony in a church is fine as a personal choice). In that system, it has been easy to conclude that no obvious signs of religion should be allowed in schools and there has been no dithering on the subject of veils and bourkas for example (not that this stance has not culminated in stupid decisions).

- It did not take long to get to this point, after which, the overall sense of agreement in the room was that we should indeed separate the Church of England from affairs of the state, so we moved on

Should we ban the burkini?

- As mentioned above, the French are so sure of their stance regarding the wearing of religious tokens, that a policeman approached a Muslim lady on the beach and asked her to remove her 'burkini' (a garment for the beach which covers all the female figure and hair). In this way, he was actually telling her she must not be modestly apparelled on the beach. This was an example of rules being applied to the letter where common sense says otherwise

'Do as you would be done by'- Is it really the golden rule?

- It is a simple way to check that you are behaving well. If you would appreciate what you are doing, then so will the other person involved
- Not always so, said Helen. For example, you might go to help an old lady to cross the road, not thinking that she might feel insulted that you think her so old
- After a few similar examples, we still felt that this maxim is a good base to start from

Should we bring back grammar schools?

- Most of those present benefitted from the grammar school system. It was most certainly a very good step up the ladder for anyone from the working class who passed the 11+. About 15% of 11 year-olds passed, 85% didn't
- Even with those statistics, Helen pointed out that the successful 15% comprised half girls and half boys, because the examiners were told to allocate girls' and boys' places separately. If not, there would have been more girls than boys who passed since girls perform better at that young age
- Some 'girls' present felt they didn't get the education their art or science-leaning minds would have preferred
- More pressing was the opinion that the 85% who didn't pass got a raw deal from their secondary school, where expectations were low, and they didn't get the best teachers.
- Socially, there were too many secondary pupils who felt failures and too many grammar school pupils who looked down on them
- If grammar schools were resurrected, richer parents would pay for tutors for their children and dominate the school population
- Overwhelmingly, the group decided that the comprehensive system was the best way forward. Setting should be introduced to ensure that each pupil is in the right group for each subject
- In an ideal world, the public schools would be abolished - giving every child an equal chance in life

Do we choose our sexuality or are we born that way?

- Viv B introduced the subject saying her grandson had announced to his parents that he is gay. There seemed to be no indications before he was 19 years old - so had it always been there or had he chosen this path for himself?

- There was a unanimous opinion that each person's sexuality is there at birth, but do there seem to be more homosexuals these days than ever there were twenty or thirty years ago? If so, everyone agreed that it was down to a change of public opinion, a growing acceptance of diversity in sexuality which make it easier to 'come out'. Not to mention that sixty years ago, it was against the law to be a practising homosexual
- Denise added to this explanation by asserting that there is a sort of range of sexual preference which explains the existence of bisexuals and transgender people
- A big majority of the group welcomed the huge changes in our attitudes to diversity in sexualities

○ Future Topics

- **The advantages of being old**
- **Are there too many public inquiries?**
- **What is the actual and preferred relationship between doctors and pharmaceutical companies?**
- **What is the state of our nation at present?**

If you have any more to offer, please email:

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○ Next Meeting

The next Café Society meeting will be on Monday 7th November 2016 at 10.00am at The Lion Hotel (Tudor Bar room).