



Monday 5th December 2016
The Lion Hotel

Minutes

o Introduction

Joy Kay gave notice of her resignation. She thanks us all for the years of participation in the group and is moving on to sample a new group activity.

14 members were present.

In a pre-session discussion, the organisation of how the group operates was changed as follows; members were invited to put their name down to do the summary for a particular month. With more than 15 regular members, this means a member will be asked to do the summary less than once a year.

Phil kindly offered to deal with tea and coffee orders in exchange for not doing a summary, which is a fair exchange.

This leaves Viv B simply to chair the discussion and we can always decide to share this job out too.

o Discussion Topics

A short summary of the subjects and discussions follows:

Should we have to produce ID to secure healthcare?

- It took a little time to realise that we don't have to produce ID – certainly not every time we apply for healthcare, because we are registered with a GP as resident in the UK and entitled to NHS care.
Then it became more clear that we were really discussing people who apply for healthcare but who are not resident in the UK. If the care is urgent, then it is provided without question, but what if a pregnant woman arrives just in time to give birth and is not a resident of the UK? This apparently, is also an urgent case.

- Eventually, we were down to the wire in discussing whether healthcare ‘tourists’ should be treated without having to pay and we could see both sides of the argument. Some members were for everyone paying a small amount (say, £5) per GP or hospital visit, but another member pointed out that small payments are notoriously expensive to collect and administer.
- Another member felt that healthcare treatment should be free for everyone, everywhere in the world, but others pointed out that such a level-playing field is not possible where some countries are much richer than others.

Is cryogenic preservation of bodies a good thing?

- This is a reference to a recent news story in which a little girl of 9 died and her father wanted her body to be frozen in case her illness could be cured sometime in the future, but her mother did not want this to happen. The father won the case.
- All members without exception thought that deep-freezing dead bodies was a pointless activity and one which only deferred the natural grieving process.
- One member asked if, when a physical body is frozen, does it mean the whole person, mind/soul and all, is kept in a frozen state?
- Another member pointed out that even if a cure was found for the illness that person had died of, nobody has thought about how it is possible to ‘resurrect’ a body from a dead state.

Should the taxpayer pay for the royal family’s home repairs?

- This subject arose because of the news that Buckingham Palace is crumbling and will cost many millions to restore.
- There is already a civil list – that is, a generous allowance of government (i.e. our) money paid yearly for the living costs of the royal family. In a time of financial difficulties for the ‘Jam’ (just about managing) section of society, it is totally unjust to pay out ever more to the royals.
- It was pointed out that Buckingham Palace does not actually belong to the royal family, but to the nation, so should it not be the government’s responsibility to look after it?
- Moreover, Buckingham Palace is a great tourist attraction and helps bring foreign money into the country.
- Yes, indeed, but it could be just as great an attraction as an art gallery, the royal family having lots of other grand houses and castles which belong to them personally.
- In the end, this discussion divided the room into two: those for and those against the monarchy. We did not take a vote, unfortunately, which may have decided the matter, but one member asserted that the royal family costs only 52p per person per year.

Should our police be routinely armed?

- At the moment, each police force has an armed unit which can be called upon at a moment’s notice.
- If the police were armed always, then everyone agreed that this would result in more arms among the criminal fraternity and would also result in more cases of the police shooting too quickly in a situation.
- Either of those consequences would be a bad move and nobody wanted the police to be routinely armed.

Is marriage worth it?

- It is clear that a lot of the younger generations live together without getting married, or live together and decide to get married at a later date. The idea of having to commit to one another in public or before the state or before God, seems to be disappearing. When people do decide to marry, it seems to be in the form of a celebration – and the more expensive a celebration the better. It was reported that £27,000 was the average spend on a wedding nowadays.
- Most of the group were for the modern attitude – that commitment is a personal matter which has nothing to do with others and that a wedding is simply a big party. Any thought of non-marriage being a disgrace has disappeared.
- If unmarried partners think they are protected to the same extent as married couples, for example if a partner dies – then they are wrong. There is no such legal state as a ‘common law spouse’. So, if a couple do not marry, they should make their financial matters clear – write a will, put the house in both names etc.
- But of course, you can do all this without marriage, and there are studies which find that married women end up with smaller salaries than unmarried women.
- Still, members felt that the children of a relationship would feel more secure if their parents were married. Also, if their parents are not married, which surname do the children take? Do they have a double-barrelled surname? If they do, what happens when these children have children of their own? Are these children hampered with four surnames?
- Member were fairly happy with the status quo and would not push the younger generation into marriage at all. In the case of older people marrying, perhaps for the second time, this was such fertile ground for discussion that we may have to analyse the subject on its own.

○ Future Topics

- Is marriage a good idea after the age of, say, sixty?
- Do we choose who we love?

If you have any more to offer, especially last-minute topical issues, please email:

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○ Next Meeting

The next Café Society meeting will be on Monday 2nd January at 10.00am at The Lion Hotel (Tudor Bar room).