



Monday 6th March 2017
The Lion Hotel

Summary

o Introduction

13 members were present.

Phil K kindly organised the group tea and coffee order.

o Discussion Topics

Viv S kindly compiled the following short summary of our discussions:

What is prison for?

- A University of Glasgow paper was quoted and formed an opening basis for discussion. Key reasons commonly given for imprisoning people who have offended were listed:
 1. To protect the public
 2. To punish the offender and deliver retribution in a serious, but proportionate way. This being a relatively recent objective after the death penalty and transportation had been abolished
 3. To pose a deterrent
 4. To rehabilitate the offender
- Conversation moved to the current parlous state of our prisons.
- These are overcrowded institutions caused by failure to have the right balance between prison capacity and sentencing rules. Government cuts, vote-catching promises for stiffer sentences and the increased numbers of sex offenders in prison were all contributing to this. The number of elderly people in prison did not help the situation either. Society also has the dilemma of a gang-culture surrounding going to prison.
- Designer prisons, as built in Scandinavia were put forward as an answer, however this would most likely involve extra taxes. Discussion followed on these, including taking a cautious approach to their design, so that they were not too comfortable and attractive to criminals, thus increasing numbers even more.

Should politicians do a year's apprenticeship in the real world?

- Discussion of this centred around the idea that it is very important for our politicians to have a broad background of real life, so that are able to engage in fair law making for the country. This was fairly strongly endorsed by everyone present. The term 'people tend to live in their own bubbles' kept reoccurring throughout.
- It was proposed that "open forum" candidate selection meetings to include members of any political party might help and also paying full attention to a candidate's CV when placing votes.

Is Crowd funding a moral thing to do?

- This topic was launched with a very useful description of crowd funding. It can be divided into 3 types:
 1. Donation requests (typically used by charities)
 2. Loan requests
 3. Share issues
- The internet has facilitated this activity. The first project was set up by a US pop group in 1997 to provide funds for a successful tour in 1997. The music industry continues to make extensive use of this method.
- After talk about moral aspects of the subject together with mention of street beggars, the conclusion was that it is morally sound, particularly as participants have full freedom of choice as to whether to take part.

Is it a good idea for the government to encourage senior citizens to quit their family homes now they no longer need so much space, so that young families have a chance to buy the homes they need?

- An initial conclusion with this subject, was that the smaller homes suitable for elderly people are not being built and if they are, they are very expensive. The market is skewed in favour of builders building larger family homes, for which they can command higher prices.
- Some progress was reported in the rental sector, with longer tenancies being made available and taxation on excessive profits from 'buy to let' being increased.
- "More social housing", was the call from all sides of the room!

○ Future Topics

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

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○ Next Meeting

The next Café Society meeting will be on Monday 3rd April at 10.00am at The Lion Hotel (Tudor Bar room). Viv B has kindly volunteered to compile the discussion summary at this meeting.