



Monday 3rd April 2017
The Lion Hotel

Summary

o Introduction

At this date our membership is 18. Today's meeting was attended by 15 members. Apologies were sent by Marilyn and Margaret T.

Phil K kindly organised the group tea and coffee order.

o Discussion Topics

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

Where does our loyalty as an individual lie?

- We have evolved to be loyal to our tribe we all agreed, but only after family. Those tribes are various however and include our workplace, our country, our social and sport clubs. Nowadays, with people moving all over the country if not the globe, and with tribes splitting and forming anew, it appears that we are choosing our tribes not having them allotted to us. For example, football fans now choose to support any club they like - hence Manchester United having fans in China. But this loyalty, even when the individual largely decides who to be loyal to, can become a barrier to other values. An example given was a boy knowing his brother was cheating in his school exams. Does his loyalty for his school make him tell or his loyalty to his brother make him not tell? On a more serious level, does one's loyalty to one's company or government prevent one from exposing uncomfortable truths? Is this why whistle-blowers are often rejected by society?
- One can only conclude that loyalty should not be at the top of our list of moral qualities. Better to follow Shakespeare:

"To thine own self be true, and it must follow as the night the day, thou canst not then be false to any man."

Is a basic income for everyone a good thing?

- Finland has recently embraced this huge change in public finance management which means that all citizens receive a basic amount deemed sufficient to survive on in a modern context. This would free all the people from worry of homelessness and starvation and no-one would have to beg social security payments from the government. It would save money by being cheap to administer - unlike social payments. Moreover, a radical new system like this may be forced upon society in the future when robots deprive the population of jobs. Also, wouldn't a safety net like a guaranteed basic income encourage people to follow their ideas to start new businesses?
- Members agreed so far but pointed out that huge job losses in local and national government would be an immediate result. Also, although not mentioned, an obvious result of everyone having some basic money would mean free services like the NHS and education might disappear on the grounds that we can then all choose how to spend our basic income. That would be catastrophic and that sobering thought provoked a vote of 7 for and 4 against a basic income in principle, with 4 abstaining.

Globalisation or protectionism?

- A subject brought to the fore by Donald Trump's regular policy announcements which often purport to be about 'justice for the working man' but turn out to be about profits for the company owners and shareholders.
- Countries may declare their support for one of these theories but will, in practise, support free trade or protectionism according to what brings more profits into the country.
- The notion of fair trade may be included in the discussion but in reality has no part to play in the profit-making company decisions and the power of trade itself rests with companies and not governments. An extreme example of this is the fact that Rothschild's bank, which is a company like any other, has the right to print money when it chooses without parliament's permission.
- Nevertheless, globalisation has been going on for decades and is propelled by global access to information through the internet. Globalisation is unstoppable. Would it not therefore seem a good idea to embrace it and use it to smooth out inequalities that cause friction in the world? In this context, Brexit – retreating into our national shells, seems rather contrary.

Should public schools have charitable status?

- A charity has to show it provides a public benefit so it is difficult to see how providing education for rich people's children can be said to be one. It is true that a lot of public schools keep a few places for gifted children from poor backgrounds but when it is recognised that almost all public schools were founded to provide free education to poor children, a tiny proportion given a free education falls wide of the mark.
- The argument was made that by educating pupils from rich families apart from the state system, public schools save the government money for other children, but it also creates a two-tier system which is unfair to children in the state system.

- Charities must normally be non-profit making, so private schools fall wide of this mark too. And finally, as a charity they are allowed to claim from the government, tax deemed to have been deducted from fees paid, thus making a minimum of 20% extra on all fees paid by parents. A vote on this was an overwhelming 'no' to charitable status for public schools (even the name 'public' was deemed to be misleading).

○ Future Topics

- A list of suggested topics follows. If you have any more to suggest, especially last-minute topical issues, please email vivienne.barker@gmail.com
 - How should we deal with our ever-growing U3A?
 - What makes a nation great?
 - Should women be referred to as 'girls'?
 - Should local government take over the NHS?
 - Is the system of paying in care homes fair?
 - Does the USA have the right to take independent military action regarding issues being addressed by the United Nations?

○ Next Meeting

The next Café Society meeting will be on Monday 1st May (a bank holiday) at 10.00am at The Lion Hotel (Tudor Bar room). Marilyn C has kindly volunteered to compile the discussion summary at this meeting.