



Monday 6th November 2017
The Lion Hotel

Summary

o Introduction

There were 13 members of the Café Society group present at the meeting including one prospective member. A summary of the meeting's discussions follows. Thank you to Phil K for organising the drinks order.

Helen T

o Discussion Topics

Should judges be allowed to let ex-offenders hide their criminal record from employers?

- At present unspent crimes must be declared and this leads to non-employment, and further crime, with some minority groups being disproportionately affected
- It was generally agreed that it would be a good idea if judges could lock a person's record under certain circumstances
- We would need to have trust in the judges, the process would be time consuming and costly, and a lot would depend on the crime and the type of job as well as on the intentions of the former criminal

Should Catalonia become independent from Spain?

- This is an historic problem which has been handled badly by the Spanish government, both in the past and in respect of the recent referendum
- Other questions were raised, for example, "Should the Catalonian leader have fled the country?" and, "Would greater autonomy for one region lead to claims across Europe from other similar regions?"

Is nationalism a positive thing?

- It was generally agreed that it is a good thing to take pride in one's culture, but a dangerous thing when this becomes exclusive with a sense of superiority
- Richer countries want to keep their wealth, and the poorer then have a platform to want to take it. Nationalism can be a way backwards rather than forwards, and can lead to racism
- Nationalism is also hard to define when it comes to border areas and to historical changes. There can be many identities within one nation, and nostalgia for the past
- The question of national identity and values is nebulous, and the assimilation of immigrants takes time

Is it more important to do work you enjoy or earn more money?

- For most people this question is a luxury. A family must be kept, and there are certain jobs which must be done, however unappealing. Nowadays many people just want a home and choice is a privilege. With younger people today, there is possibly a tendency to do their own thing and not have a boss
- The question was also raised that there is a possibility of debt-ridden graduates choosing lower-paid jobs to circumvent repayments

Is church a positive factor in our society?

- Churches do a lot of good in communities, providing social contact and help for the less fortunate. They provide community buildings, and beautiful music and prevent a great deal of loneliness. Although many no longer go to church, the idea was raised that the church has left a latent morality in society, although others contended that a moral sense is innate in us
- It was suggested that churchgoers might do more good work in society than non-churchgoers
- At another level, churches do a lot of harm. For example, feuds between Protestants and Catholics, the great wealth of the Vatican compared with the poverty of many Catholics, harmful teachings on AIDS, gay marriage and contraception, and the inappropriate behaviour of some priests

Would the different Christian denominations be wise to amalgamate into one?

- The consensus was 'yes', but this could probably never be achieved in practice
- The concept of unity is important and the United Reformed Church and 'Churches Together' have made great progress. Other denominations will probably never be persuaded, as there are multitudinous interpretations of the Bible
- Generally, tolerance of other beliefs is to be encouraged, but not all beliefs are tolerable
- With unity, where would ultimate authority lie? In humans there is a continuum from those who wish to decide everything

○ Future Topics

Below is a list of topics that have been forwarded for future discussion. If you have any additional suggestions, especially last-minute topical issues, please email vivienne.barker@gmail.com

- What are the roots of our identity?
- What are British values?
- Would you press the nuclear button?

○ Next Meeting

The last Café Society meeting of 2017 will be on Monday 4th December at 10.00am at The Lion Hotel (Tudor Bar room). Ken C has kindly volunteered to compile the discussion summary at this next meeting.

