



Monday 5th February 2018
The Lion Hotel

Summary

o Introduction

There were 17 members of the Café Society group present at the meeting (including 2 new joiners). Apologies had been received from Ken C, Irene B, and Denise M. Thank you to Phil K for organising the drinks order. A summary of the meeting's discussions follows.

Mike S

o Discussion Topics

Should U.S. President Donald Trump be granted a state visit to the United Kingdom?

- The initial reaction of group members was a resounding 'No' but discussion developed when it was pointed out that a state visit is more about diplomacy than politics. 'How much good have you achieved if you snub any world leader?', was a question that was asked
- Some members questioned the true motives of modern diplomacy and asked why it always seems to revolve around trade deals. Isn't it more important to do the right thing rather than sell our souls for beneficial trade deals? Donald Trump's intentions for international diplomacy could be summarised by the slogan with which he won his election - 'Put America first'
- Some members of the group felt that the historic friendship and cultural similarity between the U.K. and the U.S. was too important to jeopardise just because the current U.S. president wasn't a popular choice of the U.K. population. It was also mentioned that many other unpopular country leaders had been welcomed on state visits over the years, so would it be consistent to deny an invite in this case?
- There was a suggestion that state visits in general should be done away with in order to focus on politics and trade rather than pomp and ceremony
- With an informal show of hands, most of the group indicated a preference to discontinue the concept of state visits and most expressed a personal disliking of the current U.S. president

Why are newly-built houses not fitted with solar energy capabilities?

- Some members of the group thought that there may be impracticalities of solar energy, like the temperate U.K. climate and the direction and angle of rooftops. Later on in the discussion however, it was explained that solar panels generate electricity from daylight, not necessarily direct sunshine
- Most members thought it was strange that modern building regulation do not insist on this type of renewable energy. Other European countries were given as examples of this practice having been in places for many years

- The difficulties in storing electricity and energy were quoted as being more of a problem than the generation of power and the work of the Tesla company was praised for its efforts in this direction
- Schemes where homeowners leased their rooftops to solar panel installation companies were discussed and caution was expressed due to the legal side effects of such arrangements
- The unsightliness of panel installations was mentioned but most members couldn't see any reasonable objections to more houses having rooftop panels. A member quoted the statistic that only 2 out of 17 U.K. homes make use of renewable energy and there was general disappointment that this figure was so low
- The group was of the opinion that there was no incentive for construction companies to incorporate such equipment as it would only raise the building cost of the properties but of course that additional cost would reduce if it were to become commonplace
- The group unanimously believed that solar panel technology should be adopted for new buildings

When should you throw out a childhood teddy / cuddly toy?

- 'Never!', said one group member
- Another group member joked that it was more important to throw out the children
- Four members of the group admitted to still having a childhood stuffed toy on display in their homes (one of which was a duck)

Is it bad taste to have artificial flowers in the home?

- The eco-friendlier members of the group felt that it was more distasteful to have real flowers on display while other members of the group expressed a dislike for decorative plastic balls
- There was a mention of housing associations that ban the display of hanging baskets (e.g. www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newsttopics/howaboutthat/6086939/Hanging-baskets-banned-by-housing-association-as-health-and-safety-risk.html) and the different tastes of the social classes (e.g. www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-3145685/How-posh-garden-patios-hanging-baskets-tidy-lawn-sign-lower-middle-class.html)
- The discussion branched into the acceptability of artificial laws (which some members considered bad for the environment and wildlife) and appropriateness of taking fresh flowers to people in hospital (which is not permitted in some hospitals)
- There was a mixed response to the topic as most members considered the notion of taste to be subjective. However, with an informal show of hands, more than half of the group declared that they had some form of artificial flora on display in their home

Is it acceptable for a school headteacher to ban romantic relationships?

- *This topic was raised in connection to the recent news article about Ruthin private school in North Wales whose headteacher announced that pupils who have a boyfriend/girlfriend would be expelled: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/2018/01/23/headteacher-leading-public-school-says-will-expel-pupils-have>*
- The practical difficulties of applying and enforcing such a rule were quickly brought to light by the group members. How would a romantic relationship be defined? How would the boundary between friendship and relationship be drawn? Would a ban on relationships only serve to make the prospect more attractive or drive it into secrecy?
- As the topic was discussed further, most members of the group suspected that the school in question was probably making a public statement to give the impression that something was being done to address the issue but that the rule itself would be unlikely to be applied
- One member explained that it would be a contradiction to say that pupils cannot fall in love while teaching from classic literature like Romeo and Juliet

Where do you do your best thinking?

- *This topic was introduced to fill a few minutes before the end of the meeting*
- 'When walking', and 'when in a car or bus', were two answers that came from the group
- In a recent survey, other popular answers were 'when doing chores', 'when in the bath or shower' and 'when sitting quietly'

Does Shrewsbury's Darwin Festival have too much of a philosophical bias?

- *This topic was suggested by a group member who would welcome more of a focus upon science*
- A member explained that the town's promotion of Darwin is relatively new and still somewhat underdeveloped
- A comment was made that scientific exhibitions and celebrations are often more expensive to organise
- Discussion led to Shrewsbury's decision to refuse the formation of university in the 1960s and earlier. It was felt that these missed opportunities to embrace education had delayed development of the town's identity and led to slogans like 'Shropshire - the county of lost ambitions'

○ 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

- We are in need of suggestions

○ Next Meeting

The next Café Society meeting will be on Monday 5th March 2018 at 10.00am at The Lion Hotel (Tudor Bar room).

