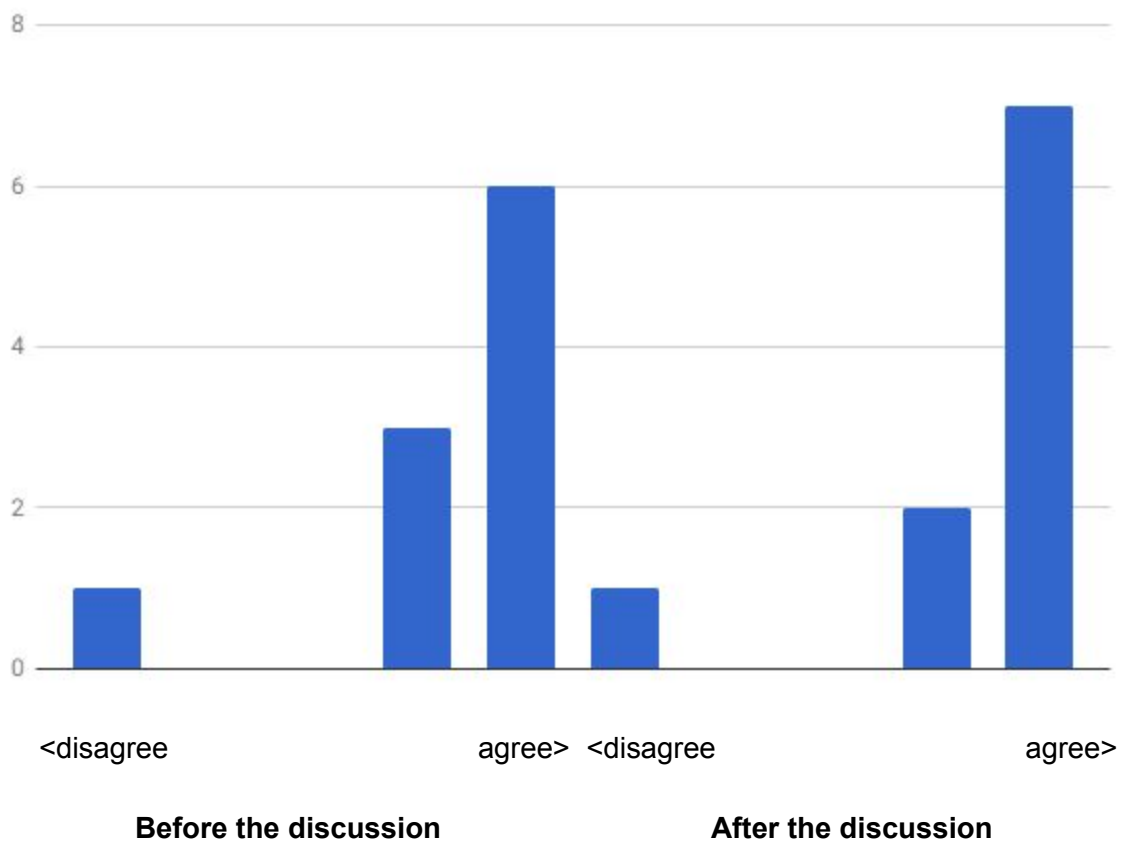


Political Thinking

Meeting No 11 17th July 2017

Topic. "A Free Press is an essential form of protection of individual liberty in a democratic society . "

Participants' opinions	Before discussion	82%	agreement,
	After discussion	85%	agreement



Before the discussion opinion was very much in agreement with the topic.
As a result of a vigorous animated and free-ranging discussion discussion opinions shifted somewhat toward strong agreement..

Discussion

While there was strong agreement with the topic, much of the discussion was concerned with perceived threats and potential weaknesses; leading to some suggestions for remedies to deal with the shortcomings.

Principal points made during the debate

By those tending to **agree** that “ A Free Press is an essential form of protection of individual liberty in a democratic society . ”

- The impartiality, integrity and responsibility of individual journalists is the basis of a Free Press.
- Truth is not always an absolute, and can sometimes be subject to interpretation.
- Journalists should be accountable for telling the truth; journalists should be “struck off “ for false statements, “regulated” by the NUJ, as comparable with solicitors and doctors.
- Mainstream media are too close to the political establishment; politicians restrict information to journalists whom they suspect will be critical or unsupportive; while giving “stories” to those who will provide favourable coverage.
- Mainstream media are controlled by too few people, eg Rupert Murdoch; mechanisms are need to allow workers and readers to have input into editorial policy.
- TV journalists in particular influence viewer reactions, radio journalists influence listeners, by language, by facial expressions, by other body language; complete impartiality is almost impossible.
- A news story can be changed by editing the order in which footage is shown; to emphasise or playdown particular aspects which the news editor considers important.
- Effective regulation is needed in respect of media other than Press, radio and TV; particularly social media; but it is not clear how this should be implemented or what form it should take.

Principal points made by those pointing out the consequences of a lack of a Free Press or recounting the benefits:-

- There has been an adverse impact on individual liberty in countries such as Turkey and China, and a negation or denial of democracy.
- In the political arena, investigative journalism in cases such as Watergate in the US or the expenses scandal in the UK led to exposures, which most consider to have been in the public interest.
- A Parliamentary committee should be responsible for regulating the mainstream media; (scepticism was expressed about the compulsory or voluntary schemes currently in place.)