



My thoughts in anticipation of ECBG's forthcoming Autumn Discussion event with Phillip Blond and James Featherby, **"IT'S UP TO US! Taking stock of personal and corporate responsibility for the wellbeing of community"**:

Western societies are witnessing the collapse of the "Old Order", and it is frightening. We are in an economic and social crisis like never seen before – despite indications of a slow recovery, our economy remains in a perilous state, and the gap between rich and poor, enfranchised and disenfranchised, may well be growing.

What is the Old Order? It is built on two main pillars: Democracy and Capitalism, both of which are apparently crumbling today. This is frightening because it is all we know, all that we have trusted, and what our social and economic structures are built on.

So whilst our politicians and commentators are focussed on the multitude of immediate issues that surround us: economy, education, health, EU, defence, terrorism, environment, etc., only scant attention is paid to the fundamental issue that the system is broken.

What has gone wrong? Or perhaps not wrong, but what has changed? One important factor I believe is that, to a large extent, the Old Order was built on Christian values. It is these values (shared also by people of other faiths and no faith) that make both democracy and capitalism work: love thy neighbour, and most importantly the sense of duty and service to others before self. Where these are absent or in short supply, then it is perhaps inevitable that capitalism becomes divisive and destructive and we lose confidence in our democratic structures of governance.

Such systemic failure, as I perceive it, will not be corrected by Government or Markets or Mega-business, it will only be corrected by individuals, families, communities and progressively wider and wider social structures changing behaviour. Whatever language we choose to dress it up with, the necessary change is a return to the values to which I referred above.

The wonders of the internet give us instant mass communication and information access, however perhaps the danger of this is that the ease of the click of a mouse replaces real participation and engagement between people; the illusion of duty done by simply pointing to the problem or by expressing an opinion, whilst leaving responsibility for actually making things better with others.

The realisation that government will not solve our problems is an essential precursor to progress, and is the key that will enable despair and disconnection to be transformed into hope, participation and growth. "IT'S UP TO US!"

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