THIS HOUSE BELIEVES IN POLITICAL DEBATE NOT POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

‘Political correctness has become such an issue that we are debating if we should be debating in a debate’

First Proposition: Joseph Spencer
Joseph Spencer, a fourth-year historian at Pembroke, opens his speech, “Diverse debate... should contain not only diversity of people but diversity of views”. He explains that, “It is extremely effective and saves a lot of time to condemn arguments rather than consider them”, going on to use the Blair government’s attitude towards opponents of immigration as an example, “in essence political correctness was used to discredit opponents of rapid immigration”. He ends with the point that, “we cannot know with any certainty that our progressive political mores are correct”.

First Opposition: David McRedmond
McRedmond begins in a light-hearted manner, “This isn’t a politically incorrect statement by not wearing a dinner jacket... I just didn’t get the memo”. He then moves on to serious matters, explaining that, “this insidious label of political correctness has been applied by those who have power to take away the voices of those who don’t”. McRedmond, former CEO of Ireland’s largest commercial broadcaster TV3, closes his speech by urging, “don’t deride it as political correctness if you don’t like it, debate it”.

Second proposition: Korkor Kanor
“I’m unhappy that this motion has to exist at all” began Korkor Kanor, pointing out that, “the best way to dispel... terrible ideas is to debate against them”. Kanor, a journalist and student activist, went on to argue that, “my experience should be reflected in my politics and should not be camouflaged by political correctness”. She reminds us jokingly that, “Political correctness has become such an issue that we are debating if we should be debating in a debate”, concluding by stating her desire “to see free speech and political correctness in the same arena”.

Second Opposition: Siobhan Fenton
Siobhan Fenton, a journalist who is currently reading for a Masters in Gender Studies, establishes her point with this premise, “I oppose this false dichotomy on the issue that prevails in the press”. She notes that, “when people do things like no platforming, they are putting into concrete form things that have been more subtle in the past”, before concluding with this persuasive statement: “There is a relationship between offense and oppression and where we draw that line is something we need to be very, very careful about”.

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Third Proposition: Dr Joanna Williams
Dr Joanna Williams began an incendiary argument with a necessarily inflammatory statement, “political debate and political correctness are mutually exclusive”. Dr Williams, who is a senior lecturer at the University of Kent, surmised that a politically correct world would be “a world without passion, without spontaneity, without fun… to find oneself comatose would be a blessed relief”, before concluding with the idea that all significant advances in knowledge have caused great offense, including the introduction of women at the University of Cambridge. Her closing statement was that the “best way to challenge views you don’t like is to argue against them, and that means more free speech”.

Third Opposition: Srishti Krishnamoorthy
Reflecting on her initial thoughts on the motion, Srishti Krishnamoorthy pointed out that, “we place far more constrictions on the act of debating than on the act of speech” as this allows an equal chance for all to speak. Political correctness, Srishti argues, is part of this, as it is “a meaningful mechanism that enables all voices to be heard”. “You cannot have a debate if you cannot have a platform for all groups of people” Srishti concluded.

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For footage of the event go to https://www.youtube.com/user/cambridgeunionsoc

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