

## **OBITUARY**

### **Common Sense (d. 2013)**

Reports of the death of Common Sense have now been widely circulated for some considerable time, and although no precise dates of birth or death can be given (which, in any case, would have been smothered in red tape), it is generally felt that the present climate of overwhelming bureaucracy and the concomitant nanny-state contributed greatly to the final and rapid decline.

Of immediate surviving family, there are (predictably) few indeed; but as far as can be ascertained, it is true to say that Common Sense was among the scattered remaining scions of what a former age would have recognised as a genealogy of those qualities essential not only for the general health and efficient running of a well-ordered and just society, but also for a nation whose once universally-perceived former greatness was now not quite what it might be.

Long cherished by many of a certain age, but less familiar to a rising generation, Common Sense was born to parents Truth and Trust who themselves died young, leaving their only surviving child (an elder daughter, Discretion, had died at birth) as an infant to battle against overwhelming odds in an increasingly cynical world. Schooled in the true spirit of an earlier age, the parents were a couple firmly in charge of their child, unhindered by external authority in maintaining discipline for his future benefit. In consequence, Common Sense was brought up on thrift, hard work and simple financial policies where credit still assuredly meant debt and the pennies were counted on strictly Pickwickian principles. Such now unfamiliar treasures were dutifully handed on to a promising child by anxious parents only too unaware of what lay in the future.

Alas, had they lived, Truth and Trust would have foreseen, in their prudent way, that the life of their child would be a valiant struggle to maintain long-held values in the face of a rising torrent of such nonsenses as (we choose from a list over-brimming with possibilities) children arrogating the rights of parents but rejecting the responsibilities; a plethora of ill-written and badly-spelled public information signs, symptomatic of an education policy on its knees and frequently stating what would be obvious to a blind man; a nation ludicrously stuck half-way between imperial and metric measures where the greengrocer was four hundred yards away, but traded in kilos; hospital league tables offering options to those without sufficient knowledge on which to make

a reasoned choice or the wherewithal to take themselves to the preferred second venue; continued outcries and demands for a public enquiry when a train crash resulted in half a dozen deaths, whilst some 3,000 people died annually on the roads, many killed by vehicles built to travel at twice the national permitted speed limit; and former publicly-owned utilities whose sole purpose of continuing existence seemed to be exponential price-increases and the satiation of share holders at the expense of the less affluent domestic consumer. (Common Sense had once had the temerity to write a carefully composed letter of complaint to one such company following a public revelation and scandal about its accounting and business practices, but was nonplussed when told that as all those concerned had terminated their own contracts and retired with severance payments and unaffected pensions before the news broke, there was little more that could be done.)

Common Sense followed no set career; he was content with a wandering life-style, offering a valued presence in the countless numbers of places where it was deemed imperative – so much so that it was inevitable that he would often spread himself too thinly, and on such occasions two distant and failing cousins, Justice and Fortitude, would sometimes come to his aid. In middle-life he found his skills frequently spurned by the many who should have known better, and by the time a meagre state pension was in the offing, he could see that a natural redundancy had supervened and rendered him all but useless.

Few attended the funeral as many were unsure as to whether there would be any actual remains left to be buried. Fortified by the rites of a Church of England which he perceived as one of the few bastions of modern life which had successfully resisted ruinously expensive and largely unnecessary consultant-led modernisation whose fees would easily outweigh any proposed saving, the final moments of the interment witnessed a few handfuls of earth dropped with great effort onto the coffin by two decayed cousins, Sense and Sensibility, whilst an aged third, Temperance, could but look on helplessly. Two mysterious late arrivals at the grave-side, identified by their lapel badges as Health & Safety, only fumed at what they saw as the dereliction of public standards because no warning sign about a hole in the ground was to be seen within a 3.4725-metre circumference.

A wife, Modesty, predeceased him many years ago, as did two sons, Responsibility and Reason, although a maternal grandmother, Eccentricity, survived to a very great age. In his latter years Common Sense formed an unstable but enduring relationship with an old but ailing

friend, Prudence; there were several spurious children who flourish widely to this day from what some perceived as an unnatural union; of Folly, Ignorance and Greed there have been countless sightings, but of Foresight, Discretion and Sagacity it is recorded that they were early exposed to the murderous and cuckoo-like tendencies of their elder and more ambitious siblings.

ENDS (900 words)

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