

## **Our single answer is that we have many answers!**

### ***Thought for the Day***

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***Broadcast on Radio Scotland, 26 March 2025***

It's not a show I usually watch, but BBC1's *Only Connect* recently caused a sensation in the Jewish community when an out-and-proud threesome called "Four Opinions" won it. Of course their name immediately generated controversy, because if two Jews have three opinions, as the old adage goes, surely three of us must have more than just four!

I have to say I find this very familiar territory! My organisation, the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities, has just reinvented itself as the Jewish Council of Scotland, and you can't imagine the squabbles about name, acronyms, branding, logos, and so on!

But what remains constant is our purpose to *represent, connect, and support Jewish people in Scotland*, a task made challenging by our diversity – of opinion, of identification, geography, age, gender, and colour. It's even tougher now, since the last census found an extra 1,466 people who identify as Jewish by ethnicity but not religion.

So how can we be the single voice of such a diverse community? We're not like the Trade Union in the old joke that voted by a million to 900,000 that everyone preferred coffee to tea! No, we're like the "Four Opinions" – our single answer is that we have many answers! So whether it's about assisted dying, or marriage, or the middle east, or education, we don't just speak for the majority and silence our minorities.

That's a stark contrast with the supposed defenders of free speech who try to drown out their opponents, so I was heartened to hear a representative of Amnesty say on Radio 4 last week that "People do not have a human right to engage in, or incite, racist violence".

So let's hear it for genuine free speech and rational debate, and reject bullying and intimidation. As Voltaire notoriously didn't say, even if we disapprove of what someone says, we should defend their right to say it!

*Ephraim Borowski*

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