

PLYMSTOCK & DISTRICT U3A

DISCUSSION GROUP

RECORD OF PAST MEETINGS - 2014

2nd January 2014

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

David Salmon (DS)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Tony Starkey (TS)

Tony Romang (TR)

Enid Neil (EN)

Questions asked :-

DT – Multiculturalism in Britain is frequently spoken of in a derogatory manner, but it never seems to be defined. How do you understand it to be defined?

TR – Is it acceptable to inspect a product and possibly have a demonstration of it in a high street shop, then purchase it on the internet?

TS – Are there any U3A groups which you would like to see formed, other than those which already exist or are proposed?

EN – What country would you live in if you were forced to leave the UK, and why?

DS – Should more strict scrutinising of our politicians be undertaken, before they are elected?

DT – We used to hear a lot about David Cameron's 'Big Society'. Was it a great idea, a cynical smoke-screen for public service cuts, both or neither?

6th February 2014

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

David Salmon (DS)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Norma Gayton (NG)

Tony Romang (TR)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Questions asked :-

DT – The Government is about to make our medical records available to non-medical / commercial organisations unless we opt out, and is being less than frank with the public. Is this an extreme case of the cost of everything and the value of nothing?

BM – Should a woman be forced to choose between a high-powered job and motherhood, and not to expect to have the option of both?

NG – Considering that David Cameron said last winter that the West Country must never again be cut off, don't current scenes prove the emptiness of his promises? Questions of the closure of Plymouth airport, overseas aid, and halting immigration to deflect housing off flood plains were put to the panel.

DS – With the reliance on just one fragile line through Dawlish, should we go for a long-term solution of a new route through Dartmoor?

TR – Should all schools be independent of religion, and teach only comparative religion to a national curriculum?

BT – Should smoking in cars be banned, as proposed?

MC – Should people who assist euthanasia be charged with murder, or should euthanasia be legalised?

6th March 2014

Present :-

Norma Gayton (NG)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Enid Nei (EN)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Tony Starkey (TS)

Questions asked :-

NG – I am in the process of booking a holiday in Russia during June – am I doing wrong?
(Norma pointed out that the current crisis in the Crimea was not in view when she booked her forthcoming Russian holiday)

BM - More women are wanted in Parliament but are women driven by politics to the same extent as men?

EN - If you had the power of your God for only five minutes, and could use it as you see fit, what would you do with that power?

BT - Should the Council be spending money on cycle lanes rather than using it to repair properly the dangerous road potholes and for altering or removing speed humps which are causing so much damage to vehicles?

TS - Was Russia justified in sending troops into the Crimea at this stage of the crisis?

NG - Do you agree with Nick Harvey that there are Better ways of helping children's education than spending public money on providing free meals for under eight year olds?

BM - When we age, do we really become mirror images of our parents?

3rd April 2014

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Norma Gayton (NG)

Tony Starkey (TS)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Questions asked :-

DT – Should the personal use (only) of all drugs be decriminalised?

MC – Should the Police Force be a totally non-political service?

NG – Unlike many councils, Plymouth City Council has put up its Council Tax – where is the money going?

BM – Can lonely people help themselves?

BT – In view of the disappearance of MH370 and all the modern detection technology available, shouldn't steps be taken to prevent a recurrence?

TS – How much does personal charisma affect voters' political choices?

DT – What are the main ingredients of romantic love?

1st May 2014

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Tony Starkey (TS)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Questions asked :-

DT – The 22 May European Parliament elections use a PR system based on party lists, which effectively exclude any candidate of independent views not towing a party line. Is this an insult to democracy?

MC – Should unqualified teachers be allowed to teach in schools?

BM – Do human beings take on attributes of old age simply because they are aware of it?

TS – Do you believe that Nigel Farage is able and willing to prevent extremist right wing racists from joining UKIP?

BT – Would it not be Better for Bretonside Bus Station to be revamped, rather than relocated to Western Approach?

5th June 2014

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Questions asked :-

DT – The Ukraine crisis presents chilling parallels with events leading up to past World Wars. In this year of poignant memories, can the world's leaders learn from history, and prevent this crisis spiralling out of control?

MC – Plymouth City Council has implemented public consultation on Designated Public Places Orders in Devonport and surrounding areas regarding drinking in public places. Should this be extended throughout Plymouth?

BT – Should USA have traded the release of their Army Sergeant in exchange for 5 Taliban leaders? Will this encourage more hostage taking?

BM – Run properly, would a United States of Europe be a good proposition?

DT – Whenever there is civic unrest, especially when ethnic minorities are involved, we see Government engaging with so-called 'community leaders', but who, if anyone, do you regard as your community leaders?

MC – If you could have a dinner date with anyone in UK, who would you choose?

3rd July 2014

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Margaret Thompson (MT)

Questions asked :-

DT – Would the smooth running of Government be helped or hindered by a fully elected House of Lords?

BT – Is the Government right to ban the use of local authority camera cars for the prosecution of parking offences?

MC – Should the covering of the face with burkhas, scarves and helmets in public places be banned for other than safety purposes?

MT – How should the NHS be funded?

DT – Is the system of the TV Licence Fee to fund the BBC a nonsense?

MC – As a one liner, what are the qualities you would require in a politician?

7th August 2014

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Norma Gayton (NG)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Questions asked :-

DT – If Israel's intention had been to defend itself from the threats from Gaza in a proportionate, effective, and legal way, how should it have gone about it?

BT – Should cyclists pay road tax and have insurance?

BM – Would racial tensions be eased if immigrants Anglicised their names?

NG – The energy companies have announced they are going to raise their prices, because consumers have followed Government advice to use less energy and to swap to less greedy smaller companies. What should the Government do about this?

DT showed a draft document for the 'News' section of the U3A website. This was discussed, along with how more group members may be encouraged to join.

4th September 2014

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Margaret Thompson (MT)

Questions asked :-

DT – What outcomes do you want to see from the forthcoming NATO summit in Wales?

MC – Was it right for Southampton Hospital to make Aysha King a ward of court, or should the parents have been left to make the decisions regarding his treatment?

MT – Are good looks a help or a hindrance in life?

DT – Would a 'Yes' vote for Scotland weaken the UK in the long term?

MC – The Eco School at Dartington has been condemned as unfit for purpose. Who should take responsibility for this?

2nd October 2014

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Questions asked :-

DT – How can the problem of young British Muslims being attracted to radicalisation best be tackled, mindful of the dangers of over-reaction having the opposite effect?

BM – Has the world changed fundamentally during our lifetime?

MC – If you could improve Plymouth, what would you do, with the younger generation in mind?

DT – What best symbolises English (as opposed to British) identity?

6th November 2014

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Keith Diffey (KD)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Questions asked :-

DT – Now that English devolution is gathering momentum, how should this best be addressed to the satisfaction of all stakeholders, and to what time scale, as opposed to a knee-jerk solution to suit vested party political interests?

MC – Should children be held in police cells?

BM – Should NHS patients in hospital pay for catering?

(Note: Questions of BM & KD discussed as one, due to their similarity.)

JS – Has the use of credit cards increased spending, and the numbers of people getting into debt?

BT – Was it a good idea to stop the requirement to display the road tax disc?

DT – As Vladimir Putin is so widely loathed in western Ukraine, a brisk trade has emerged there selling toilet paper picturing him. Who would you choose to have pictured on your toilet paper, and why?

4th December 2014

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Vivienne Norris (VN)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Questions asked :-

DT – There is a saying that ‘the love of money is at the root of all evil’. What do you consider to be the main root causes of evil?

MC – What are the qualities necessary to become a politician?

BM – Do you expect another coalition government in 2015?

VN – Is calling somebody a ‘Pleb’ really such an insult?

JS – Do we need over 600 MPs?

BT – Should substance abuse by pregnant mothers that damages their foetuses be criminalised?

DT – Can the human race survive until the year 3000 without self-destructing?