

PLYMSTOCK & DISTRICT U3A

DISCUSSION GROUP

RECORD OF PAST MEETINGS - 2015

8th January 2015

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Vivienne Norris (VN)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Keith Diffey (KD)

Sue Clements (SC)

Questions asked :-

DT – It is often stated that the first duty of government is to protect the public. How widely should that duty extend, and are increasing public expenditure cuts threatening the UK Government's ability to fulfil that duty?

MC – Should the media be subject to religious censorship?

BM – Where is the fine line between freedom of speech and offence?

BT – Should drunken people pay for their A&E treatment once they have recovered?

JS – Do men make Better cooks?

VN – Should we bring back National Service?

5th February 2015

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Vivienne Norris (VN)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Sue Clements (SC)

Questions asked :-

DT – Throughout western countries, electors are rejecting the political establishment in increasing numbers. To what extent is this good, and to what extent bad, or worse?

BM Do we expect too much nowadays? If so, why?

MC – Should schools be closed when there is only a small amount of snow?

JS – Are messages of condolence newsworthy, and is this too intrusive?

VN – Is the use of first names to address customers, etc. nowadays, acceptable?

BT – Has comedy drastically changed, or have we become people who laugh at anything?

SC – Is the Turner Prize and much of contemporary art a matter of “The Emperor’s New Clothes”, or a very clever ruse to make money for a few insiders’?

5th March 2015

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Vivienne Norris (VN)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Sue Clements (SC)

Questions asked :-

DT – How should NATO countries respond to the threat of Russian expansion, so that the situation doesn't spiral out of control?

JS – Does turning IS extremists into celebrities by the media just encourage more extremists?

MC – Is it right that people responsible for the care of vulnerable children should be threatened with 5 years' imprisonment if they fail in their duty of care?

BT – Should the clergy involve themselves less in politics?

SC – Does the apparent surge in support for the SNP, and their likely gaining of many seats at the forthcoming General Election, mean the inevitable break-up of the UK, and does this matter?

BM – Has this Government done anything in the last 5 years to alter your life?

VN – Should we adopt a similar immigration policy to Australia with a points system?

2nd April 2015

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Keith Diffey (KD)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Sue Clements (SC)

Questions asked :-

DT – A young first time voter at the forthcoming General Election seeks your advice, not about who they should vote for, but on what procedures they should follow to arrive at their decision. What advice would you give?

MC – Should all employment be on a zero hours contract?

BT – Does the Prime Minister's media interview in his domestic environment portray him as a good family man to the electorate, or is it just seen as a cynical political ploy?

BM – Is the authoritarian ('eastern') world going to oppress women further, or is the libertarian ('western') world going to emancipate women further? Who will hold sway?

JS – Should Prince Charles still be able to lobby MPs when he becomes King?

SC – Has the drive by broadcasters to address the gender balance resulted in some women who are too lightweight being used?

KD – Should political parties be required to ensure that a minimum percentage of their candidates are women?

7th May 2015

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Questions asked :-

DT – Which is better for the country? A party with an overall majority in Parliament, supported by little more than a third of voters, or a coalition of parties drawing support from over 50% of voters across the UK.

MC – Should NHS doctors be allowed to work in the private sector?

JS – Northern Ireland is introducing the criminalisation of the use of sex workers. Is this a step backwards in today's world?

MC – What qualities do you seek in your preferred Parliamentary candidate?

DT – What book or books have most influenced you, and why?

4th June 2015

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Keith Diffey (KD)

Sue Clements (SC)

Questions asked :-

DT – Is the advent of social networking, with the inherent brevity of some of its platforms, being seen as a replacement rather than a supplement to other forms of communication, causing a degradation in the use of language?

BM – We are going to have a referendum on whether to stay in the EU, but how are we to find out the informed facts and arguments impartially?

MC – If Scotland gains independence, will they still be members of the EU?

These next 2 questions (from SC & KD) were handled as one, because of their great similarity.

SC – Why is it when someone dies, all their so called critics become huge fans?

KD – Should we speak ill of the dead?

BT – Are some charities getting greedy?

BT – Do you like people popping in on you, rather than giving you prior warning?

DT – What brings the broadest smile to your face?

2nd July 2015

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Keith Diffey (KD)

Sue Clements (SC)

Questions asked :-

DT – Is a Greek exit from the Euro an option that the rest of Europe can tolerate, both for economic reasons and political reasons?

SC – Do we overdo the commemoration of historical events, and does this encourage a jingoistic perspective?

KD – Schools are now encouraged to teach ‘British values’. What do you think they are?

BM – Would it be a better world if it were a woman’s world rather than a man’s world?

DT – You are 18 again, and about to go to university. Assuming you comfortably meet your degree’s entry requirements, which degree would you choose, and why?

6th August 2015

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Questions asked :-

DT – How should the world’s rich countries best handle the upsurge in refugees and economic migrants, in ways which are both pragmatic and compassionate?

JS – What do you think the result of the EU Referendum will be?

MC – Is it right that hunters can go out and shoot animals for pleasure?

DT – Is the pursuit of historical crimes, where the perpetrators no longer pose a risk to the public, a good use of scarce police and criminal justice resources?

3rd September 2015

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Sue Clements (SC)

Questions asked :-

DT – Our Government tells us there is no alternative to austerity. Are they correct, do they believe it themselves, or do they just want *us* to believe it?

BM – Why cannot we apply insurance type excesses to the NHS?

BT – Is laughter the best medicine?

BT – Should people be able to end their own life with assistance, when their quality of life makes it no longer worth living?

JS – Do we need 826 members in the House of Lords, and should half of them be made to retire?

SC – Is the Government correct to be appearing to be stepping back from supporting renewable energy sources?

MC – Should all non-EEC immigrants be detained for 8 weeks, during which they are inducted to their host country's values and swear allegiance to it?

JS – Who would you vote for in the Labour Party leadership contest?

1st October 2015

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Janet Connell (JC)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Sue Clements (SC)

Questions asked :-

DT – Do you believe there is a case for Britain having a nuclear deterrent which is independent, and if so, what is it?

JS – Is the misguided voice of compassion making the migrant crisis worse?

BM – Has British politics shifted in the last few months?

BT – From today, drivers smoking in a car with a passenger under 18 will be fined. Should all smoking in cars be banned?

SC – Is George Osborne right to cosy up to China so much?

JS – If you found somebody else's rubbish on the street, would you pick it up and put it in a bin?

DT – Who do you regard as the greatest ever Briton, and why?

5th November 2015

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Janet Connell (JC)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Questions asked :-

DT – What do you see as the main ingredients of strong, positive leadership?

JC – Do you agree with parents being fined for taking their children out of school for a family holiday in term time?

MC – Should the Government pay compensation to those stranded in Sharm-el-Sheik?

The next 2 questions (BM & JS) were taken in tandem as they covered similar ground, with a third question being generated by the discussion:

BM - Can the NHS survive without charging patients an excess?

JS – Should NHS junior doctors be contemplating a strike over alterations to their contracts?

3rd (generated) question – What constitutes our sell-by dates?

3rd December 2015

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Barbara Marlow (BM)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Sue Clements (SC)

Questions asked :-

DT – What is your position regarding whether Britain should engage in air strikes against IS in Syria, and which factors most influence your view?

BM – Is war itself evolving?

BT – Does British engagement in the bombing of Syria increase or decrease the threat of terrorism and radicalisation in UK?

MC – What would make your happiest ever Christmas, given a free choice of location, money, etc.?

JS – If there was a General Election now, would Jeremy Corbyn win it?

SC – Should Mark Zuckerberg's philanthropy in giving away around \$30 billion dollars over his lifetime in honour of his new-born daughter be an example that other tycoons should follow?