

PLYMSTOCK & DISTRICT U3A

DISCUSSION GROUP

RECORD OF PAST MEETINGS – 2018

4th January 2018

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Sue Clements (SC)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Bob Chapman (BC)

Di Smart (DS)

Questions asked :-

DT – Initiatives to provide more affordable housing in this country all seem to fail miserably, and the problem is worsening. What solutions do you suggest to this complex problem?

SC – What does it say about our society that we should have to contemplate 'drunk tanks' for inebriated admissions to A&E?

BT – Are too many Honours given to people of questionable merit?

JS – Saturday jobs have fallen recently by 20%. Did you have a Saturday job, and if so, did it benefit you later in life?

BC – Are the words 'hero' and 'crisis' losing their meaning these days through exaggeration?

DS – Is too much attention being paid to people's sexuality?

1st February 2018

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Sue Clements (SC)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Bob Chapman (BC)

Di Smart (DS)

Carol Lambert (CL)

John Patch (JP)

Questions asked :-

DT – Should public figures be accountable for their private conversations, and at what point should private conversations be deemed public?

DS – How responsible are you for what other people say?

MC – Should the directors of Carillion be prosecuted and their personal assets frozen, and those who have given them public sector contracts be investigated?

BT – Should students pay council tax?

JP – Are faith schools being too exclusive?

CL – How should we monitor knife carrying in schools?

SC – What hope does UK have of getting favourable trade deals with protectionist USA & China?

8th March 2018

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Bob Chapman (BC)

Di Smart (DS)

John Patch (JP)

Questions asked :-

DT – The Harvey Weinstein affair has unleashed a deluge of stories about sexual abuse and harassment, over a very wide scale of seriousness. Does excessive hysteria at the lowest end of the scale act both to demean public perception of a genuinely serious problem, and to deter harmless flirting through a climate of fear of being misinterpreted?

JS – Should people be compensated for mistreatment resulting from government policy generations ago, e.g. wartime orphans sent to Australia, then abused?

MC – Should hospitals provide emergency accommodation for staff required to stay to deal with exceptional work loads in severe weather conditions?

JP – Today people change their surnames more frequently, especially at the time of marriage. What's in a name?

DS – Do we need an International Women's Day?

BC – Is social mobility getting worse rather than better?

5th April 2018

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Sue Clements (SC)

Di Smart (DS)

John Patch (JP)

Carol Lambert (CL)

Questions asked :-

DT – What effective peaceful leverage can be exercised against a well armed nation state, flouting international law with impunity?

JS – Is there a world trend towards authoritarian dictatorships?

CL – Does dress matter?

MC – What do you most hate about being retired?

JP – Has the compensation culture gone mad?

BT – How do you feel about driverless cars?

SC – Rather than a north-south divide, should we not be more concerned about an east-west divide instead?

3rd May 2018

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Sue Clements (SC)

Di Smart (DS)

John Patch (JP)

Carol Lambert (CL)

Questions asked :-

DT – What do you think the political fall out of the Windrush scandal will be, and how much damage has been done to Britain’s international reputation as a desirable place to live and work?

JP – Is the anger directed to medical staff, such as that with the Alfie Evans case, completely out of order?

JS – Given the apparent unfolding shambles of the Brexit negotiations, would you still vote the same way as you did in the EU referendum?

CL – Who should we charge in the fight against obesity – the public, or the food producers?

SC – Is it time that we had more historical female statues erected, and who would you recommend?

BT – Has the media obsession about Harry and Meghan gone way over the top?

DS – What do you think of Cornwall County Council’s proposal of levying a 2p per litre fuel charge for mending potholes?

7th June 2018

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Bob Chapman (BC)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Sue Clements (SC)

Di Smart (DS)

John Patch (JP)

Carol Lambert (CL)

Questions asked :-

DT – Three weeks after the Sochi Winter Olympics, Putin instigated Russia's annexation of Crimea. How real do you feel the risk is that he will use the World Cup likewise as a smokescreen for another act of aggression, disregarding international law with impunity, and perhaps testing NATO's unity and resolve?

CL – Should we teach children about swearing to demystify it, rather than just ban it?

BT – Should the person in whose flat the fire started be present at the Grenfell enquiry?

BC – Is there an increasing culture of public grief?

DS – In view of the many closures of high street retailers, banks, etc., are we becoming too much of an isolated, technology based society?

SC – Are pharmaceutical manufacturers more interested in their business returns, rather than their patient beneficiaries?

JP – If Government is to allocate a higher proportion of tax to the NHS without increasing tax overall, which area of spending would you reduce to compensate?

5th July 2018

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Bob Chapman (BC)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Sue Clements (SC)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

John Patch (JP)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Questions asked :-

DT – The passage of time has inevitably resulted in the Second World War fading from living memory. Does the current state of the world suggest that the same is true about the lessons learnt from that conflict?

JS – I've just visited the war graves in the Somme. What lessons have been learnt from these wars, and who will be looking after these graves in 50 years' time?

SC – Should the boys trapped in the cave in Thailand be taught to swim out now, or remain there for several months until the dry season?

BT – There is not planned to be a light at the top of Beckly Point (on North Cross roundabout). Does this make any sense to you?

MC – There is an issue at a school in Devon approached by a hazardous road, but half the children are entitled to bus travel, the other half not. What is the solution?

JP – What is prison for, and what is happening in practice?

BC – By assisting migrants in distress on boats in the Mediterranean, are NGOs exacerbating the problem?

2nd August 2018

5th Anniversary Meeting

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Bob Chapman (BC)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Sue Clements (SC)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

John Patch (JP)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Carol Lambert (CL)

Di Smart (DS)

Questions asked :-

DT – For 70 years European democracies have relied on NATO primarily for their protection against hostile threats. Is it viable for them to continue to do so, and if not, how is future protection to be achieved?

JP – Can we trust Parliament to decide on what to do on Brexit, and if not, how do we move forward?

MC – Should politics be banned from the workplace by law?

BT – Are parents delegating too many of their responsibilities to public agencies, and is there too little family communication?

JS – We've been celebrating 70 years of the NHS, but is it sustainable in its present form?

SC – Is it feasible to imagine in a decade's time that the UK will no longer exist as it is now?

DS – Do you think it is acceptable for a cashier to refuse to serve somebody talking on their mobile phone?

BC – Should Julian Assange be let off the hook now?

6th September 2018

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Sue Clements (SC)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

John Patch (JP)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Carol Lambert (CL)

Di Smart (DS)

Questions asked :-

DT – Who do you predict will succeed Theresa May as Prime Minister, in what circumstances, and when?

DS – Should organ donation default to 'opt in', and should this be allowed to go against a family's wishes?

BT – Should authorities be empowered to deal with illegal traveller encampments far more robustly?

MC – Should Facebook be forced by law to reveal a password to enable police to investigate a suspect in a serious crime?

SC – Is sport becoming more pervasive, like a new form of religion?

JS – Why is fashion promoted to such an extent that perfectly serviceable clothes are wasted to a ridiculous degree?

JP – Should all roles in the military be open to women?

4th October 2018

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Sue Clements (SC)

John Patch (JP)

Bob Chapman (BC)

Carol Lambert (CL)

Di Smart (DS)

Questions asked :-

DT – Activities for young people rely extensively on volunteers for their existence, but are now becoming subject to widespread regulation for safeguarding. Are young people in danger of becoming net losers, in that volunteers are being deterred from getting involved?

JP – Theresa May has proposed a Festival of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in 2022. Is this a worthwhile venture?

SC – Looking at the state of the world, where on earth are we going?

CL – How should religious education be conducted in schools?

BC – Should the film be released about the Breivik massacre in Norway, especially considering the rise of the Alt-Right in Europe?

SC – Has anybody booked a holiday in Europe in April or May 2019, immediately after Brexit?

1st November 2018

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Sue Clements (SC)

John Patch (JP)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Carol Lambert (CL)

Di Smart (DS)

Questions asked :-

DT – How should UK conduct its future relationship with Saudi Arabia, and in particular, should we suspend arms sales?

CL – Are women taking what men say too seriously, or is it a way of getting their own back?

BT – Should British widows of jihadis be allowed to return to UK with their children?

JS – Is it wrong to encourage parents not to get their children vaccinated, as is being done on social media recently?

SC – Should the south-west's 12 Conservative MPs fight the region's corner better for its fair share of Government investment, using similar leverage to that used by the DUP for Northern Ireland?

JP – Would you wear a white poppy?

DT – What is your pet hate driving misdemeanour by other road users?

6th December 2018

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Sue Clements (SC)

John Patch (JP)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Carol Lambert (CL)

Di Smart (DS)

Questions asked :-

DT – How would you define ‘the national interest’?

CL – Do PCSOs and neighbourhood beat officers make a contribution to tackling crime, and making people feel more secure, in the Plymouth area?

SC – Is it morally right to recruit highly paid professionals from poorer countries, rather than training and retaining more of our own?

JS – In 1973, David McCreadie was jailed for life for horribly killing 3 young children. The parole board is proposing his release; should life mean life?

BT – Should we reintroduce dog licensing?

DS – Does Brexit offer an opportunity for the country to become more self-sufficient?

JP – With all the problems of this country, how can we stand up and be a leader in the world, as the Prime Minister says?