

PLYMSTOCK & DISTRICT U3A

DISCUSSION GROUP

RECORD OF PAST MEETINGS – 2019

3rd January 2019

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Sue Clements (SC)

John Patch (JP)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Bob Chapman (BC)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Carol Lambert (CL)

Robin Gray (RG) – prospective U3A member

Questions asked :-

DT – The Government is of the view that a no-deal Brexit would be very bad for the country, and knows that it could rely on overwhelming Parliamentary support to prevent that happening by default. Instead it has chosen to spend £2 billion on belated contingency plans for such an eventuality. Does this not demonstrate its utter contempt for taxpayers?

RG – Is HS2 worthwhile?

BC – Has the Shipping Forecast become a national treasure?

JS – Are traditional clocks going to be important in the future?

SC – Is the use of artificial sweeteners likely to prove a future health hazard?

MC – What was your most happy and interesting Christmas ever?

CL – Is the £2 million spent on the London fireworks display for New Year, and the cost of the clear up afterwards, justified?

JP – Is the UK's Honours system outdated, and are there negative implications about how it is operated?

7th February 2019

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Sue Clements (SC)

John Patch (JP)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Carol Lambert (CL)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Questions asked :-

DT – What do you regard as the main characteristics that define your British identity?

SC – Is the media too obsessed with celebrity, especially sports and movie stars?

JS – Are our lifeboat crews being abused by illegal migrants trying to enter UK?

CL – How should society react to the rise in veganism?

BT – The Government are contemplating trials of driverless cars this year. Would you feel safe in one?

JP – Should there be electoral reform to make Parliament more representative?

7th March 2019

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Sue Clements (SC)

John Patch (JP)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Carol Lambert (CL)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Bob Chapman (BC)

Robin Gray (RG)

Di Smart (DS)

Questions asked :-

DT – To what degree are western democratic values facing a serious, existential risk?

JS – To get a decent trade deal with US, do we have to accept lower farming standards for our food?

SC – What motivates people to undertake extremely risky activities, to the extent of risking their children being orphaned?

CL – Should electronic communication devices, e.g. smartphones, be banned during the school day?

BC – Which do you prefer as pets, cats or dogs?

BT – Have car servicing charges become over excessive?

RG – What is your view on assisted dying?

JP – How many of you are going to renew your passports because of the possibility of a no-deal Brexit?

11th April 2019

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

John Patch (JP)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Di Smart (DS)

Questions asked :-

DT – How do you predict the end game of the Brexit saga will play out, and when?

JS – Would you consider voting for the new Independent Group, calling themselves Change UK?

BT – How can a more concerted international effort on climate change and pollution be actioned?

DS – Do you think it is right to educate children at home?

JP – How can we become more understanding of other people's debilitating conditions?

9th May 2019

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

John Patch (JP)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Di Smart (DS)

Carol Lambert (CL)

Sue Clements (SC)

Bob Chapman (BC)

Questions asked :-

DT – Should Britain involve Chinese technology giant, Huawei, in the development of its 5G mobile network?

CL – Do you agree that homelessness should be part of the school curriculum, and if so, how should it be implemented?

BT – How are we going to get rid of Theresa May?

JP – Is the United Kingdom in serious danger of breaking up?

BC – Should we feel a conscience about knowingly paying a tradesperson in cash to avoid VAT?

JS – Do you agree with Johnny Mercer, MP that it is abhorrent that army veterans should be prosecuted for incidents in the Northern Ireland troubles?

SC – Are we now seeing the unravelling of the peaceful accords established after the Second World War?

6th June 2019

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

John Patch (JP)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Di Smart (DS)

Sue Clements (SC)

Robin Gray (RG)

Questions asked :-

DT – A test has emerged capable of predicting the likely onset of dementia many years in advance, for those at risk. If that was you, would that be the first, or last, thing you would want to know?

DS – Do we expect too much from our care services?

RG – How do we solve the problem of an acute shortage of affordable housing?

SC – When will we stop fooling ourselves that we have a special relationship with the United States?

BT – Michael Heseltine said that those who voted for Brexit were largely elderly white people. Do you regard this as racist and/or insulting?

JP – When somebody buys a house, should they investigate the surrounding circumstances first, before creating a rumpus about something related once they've moved in?

4th July 2019

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

John Patch (JP)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Di Smart (DS)

Sue Clements (SC)

Robin Gray (RG)

Bob Chapman (BC)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Questions asked :-

DT – China is acting increasingly in breach of the 1984 Sino-British Declaration on Hong Kong. Does the deafening silence of the UK Government to recent Chinese actions there clearly illustrate Britain's diminished place in the world?

BT – Is driving very slowly almost as dangerous as speeding?

JS – Should we be concerned that our national image is being perceived internationally as going downhill?

SC – Thinking of top BBC pay, how would you spend a £1million per year pay package?

RG – Is the drafting of new legislation attempting to be too specific?

BC – Should alternative medicines and treatments be offered under the NHS?

JP – It is planned to means test the over 75s TV licence on the basis of who receives pension credit? How would you do it?

RG – Is the restriction by some universities of some groups speaking appropriate?

1st August 2019

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

John Patch (JP)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Sue Clements (SC)

Robin Gray (RG)

Bob Chapman (BC)

Questions asked :-

DT – In democracies politicians expect to be held to account, mainly by other parliamentarians and journalists. Now some are seeing evasiveness, bluster and attacking the questioner as a route to success. Why, are people really taken in by these tactics?

SC – The 'British' tanker Stena Impero, seized by Iran, is registered as British, but everything about it, building, crew, etc., is very multinational. Is the responsibility for protection of such vessels falling on Britain, fair?

BT – The skipper of the QE2 aircraft carrier was relieved of his post because of misuse of his official car. Was this overkill?

RG – How do you view the Extinction Rebellion agenda and tactics?

BC – Is another Titanic a disaster waiting to happen on cruise ships?

JP – Should we encourage more computer gaming, as opposed to playing conventional games?

5th September 2019

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

John Patch (JP)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Sue Clements (SC)

Robin Gray (RG)

Bob Chapman (BC)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Di Smart (DS)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Questions asked :-

DT – The Government is clearly willing to see a hard border return to Ireland, in contravention of the Good Friday Agreement, and with that likely prompting a return to violence, mainland Britain included. Do they care?

JS – Is the Speaker acting impartially?

MC – Is there any way that Boris Johnson can be ousted by the Conservative Party for a more moderate leader, or is he adopting a more 'modern' approach?

BT – Is public service media acting impartially?

BC – Should more Blue Badge passes be issued, according to Government instructions?

RG – Could international conferences not be much more environmentally friendly by much greater use of video conferencing?

DS – Are you experiencing problems with drivers signalling incorrectly at roundabouts?

SC – Should we have a written constitution, and an elected head of state?

JP – Only 8% of service personnel seeking help with mental health problems are under 30. Does this suggest a particular problem with young men discussing their problems?

3rd October 2019

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

John Patch (JP)

Sue Clements (SC)

Robin Gray (RG)

Bob Chapman (BC)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Di Smart (DS)

Questions asked :-

DT – Do you fear the Brexit outcome will result in widespread civil unrest, and if so, how can this best be mitigated?

SC – Do we get the political leaders we deserve?

RG – How do you view governments apologising for the misdeeds of their ancestors?

JS – Will taking the Mail on Sunday to court be of benefit to Prince Harry and Meghan?

DS – How seriously do you take climate change?

BC – How do you view Labour's proposal to absorb private schools into the state system?

JP – Plymouth has a very high death rate amongst homeless people. How should this be rectified?

7th November 2019

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

John Patch (JP)

Sue Clements (SC)

Robin Gray (RG)

Bob Chapman (BC)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Di Smart (DS)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Questions asked :-

DT – Does Donald Trump's crass betrayal of the Kurds in northern Syria render any alliances or agreements with US worthless as long as he remains President?

JS – Should the law be reviewed to allow a city to avoid being paralysed by a protest movement?

DS – What is the moral difference between a fur coat (unacceptable) and leather shoes (acceptable)?

BC – Is the move to reclining seats in cinemas in complete contradiction with initiatives to reduce back injuries?

JP – Why are new high-rise buildings for accommodation going up in Plymouth, when there are new buildings with unused accommodation?

BT – A sign at Bideford says 'Little White Town', but there are now objections that this is racist. Are these objections not ridiculous?

RG – Should individual directors of corporate bodies be prosecuted instead of the corporate body, to mitigate excesses, and should bonuses for failure be severely controlled?

SC – Is Dominic Cummings a secret Russian mole?

5th December 2019

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

John Patch (JP)

Sue Clements (SC)

Robin Gray (RG)

Bob Chapman (BC)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Di Smart (DS)

Questions asked :-

DT – Proper scrutiny is an essential part of a healthy democracy. If evasion of scrutiny by a prospective Prime Minister proves to be a winning tactic at next week's General Election, what is the future for the well-being of British democracy?

RG – To reduce polarisation in society, should we have a detailed referendum on proportional representation?

JS – Is the GP crisis caused because only a third of GPs are working full-time in their surgeries?

BC – Do we assist terrorists by giving them so much publicity?

SC – Is justice not a fair fight for ordinary people, when the system is so stacked in favour of those with deep pockets?

JP – Has Prince Andrew been a naughty boy?