

PLYMSTOCK & DISTRICT U3A

DISCUSSION GROUP

RECORD OF PAST MEETINGS – 2024

4th January 2024

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Di Smart (DS)

Robin Gray (RG)

Sue Clements (SC)

John Botterell (JB)

Tony Starkey (TS)

David Mayes (DM)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Questions asked :-

DT – How seriously do you view the risk of the world sleep-walking into World War 3, as a result of further escalation of the current Middle East conflict?

TS – The state of the NHS, plus many other major issues, have dominated 2023 causing serious concern amongst the populous. How concerned are you about this country's future?

SC – The Greens, LibDems and Reform are all polling around 10%, but Reform is getting far more media attention. Why?

JB – Is the National Trust heading for disaster, with increased costs, increased admission charges, and a drop in volunteer numbers?

JS – Do you have faith in our justice system today?

DS – Why do you think that so many people no longer go to church or have faith?

1st February 2024

Present :-

Ian Scott (IS)

Di Smart (DS)

Robin Gray (RG)

Sue Clements (SC)

John Botterell (JB)

Tony Starkey (TS)

David Mayes (DM)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

John Patch (JP)

Margaret Thompson (MT)

Questions asked :-

SC – Following the recent controversy about vapes, is the nanny state a good thing?

TS – Considering the current state of world affairs, is there a possibility of World War 3 breaking out, and if so should we be increasing defence spending?

DS – On discovering recently that 80% of cut flowers are imported, should we try to buy more local produce?

JS – There appears to be an increase in knife crime with some fatal results. Where and how do youngsters obtain these weapons?

IS – Is the group aware of shortages of prescription drugs for such conditions as epilepsy, diabetes and ADHD? Is this likely to become a serious problem?

7th March 2024

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Di Smart (DS)

Robin Gray (RG)

Sue Clements (SC)

Ian Scott (IS)

Tony Starkey (TS)

David Mayes (DM)

Graham Richards (GR)

John Patch (JP)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Questions asked :-

DT – By its continued support for the Israeli government and their conduct in Gaza, albeit critically, is the west surrendering its remaining moral authority in the eyes of the rest of the world?

IS – Was Rishi Sunak right to suggest that Palestinian support marches are mob rule?

RG – Do you believe the coming General Election will be the beginning of the break up of the big parties?

DM – Do you favour the return of the death penalty for the worst forms of murder?

MC – Should soldiers on active service be charged with the murder of suspects attempting to commit mass murder?

TS – Was the Chancellor's budget announcement that £1million would be provided for a war memorial for Muslims anything other than a blatant election bribe?

4th April 2024

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Di Smart (DS)

Robin Gray (RG)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

John Botterell (JB)

Tony Starkey (TS)

David Mayes (DM)

Graham Richards (GR)

John Patch (JP)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Questions asked :-

DT – At what point does a private conversation enter the public domain?

GR – What has happened to loyalty and customer service?

JB – If UK was a republic, who would you advocate for President?

BT – Should Prince Andrew return to royal duties?

JS – Should the Tamar Bridge and Torpoint Ferry be nationally funded?

JP – How are all the vacancies in public services going to be filled?

2nd May 2024

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Di Smart (DS)

Robin Gray (RG)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

John Botterell (JB)

Tony Starkey (TS)

David Mayes (DM)

Sue Clements (SC)

John Patch (JP)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Ian Scott (IS)

Questions asked :-

DT – Do you believe that Israel is conducting the war in Gaza in accordance with the constraints of international law? If not, what other agendas is it pursuing?

DS – Do you think USA is in danger of becoming a dictatorship?

IS – How should the issue of teenage knife crime be tackled?

JB – Where locally would be your top recommendation for a visit?

TS – Recently 24 men were given long prison sentences for sexual abuse and rape of young girls, and the media was given permission to publish their photographs. Has anyone heard or seen this on BBC?

BT – Has anyone felt unwell after recent COVID jabs?

6th June 2024

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Di Smart (DS)

John Botterell (JB)

Tony Starkey (TS)

David Mayes (DM)

Sue Clements (SC)

John Patch (JP)

Bette Thomas (BT)

Graham Richards (GR)

Questions asked :-

DT – Convention wisdom supports the premise that preventing nuclear weapons proliferation makes for a safer world. Could the opposite be true?

GR – Why should utility companies now demand payment in advance by Direct Debit, when it was previously charged on historical usage?

JB – Are you happy to pay substantially extra to the water companies to sort out the sewage system, or should it be nationalised?

TS – Did the Sunak / Starmer debate inspire you in either of them?

SC – Which man will leave the best legacy, Nigel Farage or Rob Burrow?

JP – Should voting be compulsory?

4th July 2024

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Ian Scott (IS)

John Botterell (JB)

Tony Starkey (TS)

David Mayes (DM)

Sue Clements (SC)

John Patch (JP)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Graham Richards (GR)

Di Smart (DS)

Robin Gray (RG)

Margaret Connolly (MC)

Questions asked :-

DT – Is the key principle of an independent judiciary now under serious threat in western democracies?

TS – Given today's expected General Election result, is it time to consider proportional representation (PR)?

GR – Is the increasing National Debt a serious problem?

DS – Do you think too much attention is being given to gender matters?

IS – Some of the ship's crew (foreign nationals) of the ship which struck and destroyed the bridge in Baltimore, USA are being detained for an indeterminate time by US authorities, awaiting investigation. Is this justified?

JP – Last Saturday was Armed Forces Day, but without one Navy ship in Plymouth Sound. Is this indicative of our shrinking armed forces?

1st August 2024

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Tony Starkey (TS)

John Botterell (JB)

Di Smart (DS)

David Mayes (DM)

Sue Clements (SC)

John Patch (JP)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Graham Richards (GR)

Questions asked :-

DT – Can assassination ever be justified, and if so, in what circumstances?

JS – Are we too reliant on video clips to form judgements, without the full context of the circumstances?

GR – Is it fair that energy tariffs can be varied according to payment method?

SC – How can a man in such an esteemed position as Huw Edwards throw it all away?

JB – Do you think the Prime Minister is being clever in putting Rachel Reeves (finance) and Angela Rayner (housing) in charge of the most contentious issues?

JP – If the number of Olympic sports and events were slimmed down, what would you remove?

5th September 2024

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Tony Starkey (TS)

John Botterell (JB)

Di Smart (DS)

Ian Scott (IS)

Sue Clements (SC)

John Patch (JP)

Graham Richards (GR)

Questions asked :-

DT – Do you support the Government’s decision to revoke some arms sales licences to Israel on legal advice, which has caused some controversy?

IS – Is the Government right to impose VAT on private schools?

TS – Now the Taliban have imposed even more restrictions on women, what does this tell supporters of multi-culturalism?

DS – Held up by various stakeholders in moving house from a leasehold property, what action would you recommend to bring this to conclusion?

GR – Can anything be done to encourage services to offer more human interaction for customers who are not tech-savvy?

SC – Has silence gone the way of the dodo?

3rd October 2024

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Tony Starkey (TS)

John Botterell (JB)

Di Smart (DS)

Ian Scott (IS)

Sue Clements (SC)

John Patch (JP)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Questions asked :-

DT – Can pure vengeance ever be justified, especially when major government or military decisions are being influenced?

TS – Why are so many working aged men living on the streets, in some cases begging?

IS – Should there be more, less, or the same amount of regulation?

JB – Should Plymouth be doing more to provide places of interest for visitors?

SC – A recent talk at the Budleigh Salterton Literary Festival by Ian Dale listed the 6 most influential politicians since World War 2 as:-

Aneurin Bevan

Enoch Powell

Tony Benn

Roy Jenkins

Keith Joseph

Nigel Farage

And none of them were Prime Minister. Do you agree with his choice?

JP – Do parents sometimes act very unfairly by the names they give their children?

7th November 2024

Present :-

Dudley Tolkien (DT)

Tony Starkey (TS)

John Botterell (JB)

Di Smart (DS)

Ian Scott (IS)

Sue Clements (SC)

John Patch (JP)

Jo Sainsbury (JS)

Graham Richards (GR)

Margaret Thompson (MT)

Robin Gray (RG)

Anne Dennis (AD)

Questions asked :-

DT – Have US voters voted in Earth's next mass extinction, the Holocene, plus other nightmares?

TS – University fees and loans are rising by 2.7%, the first increase since 2017, whereas average pay has increased by c.30% in that time. Should students stop moaning?

IS – What is your view on the upcoming Assisted Dying Bill?

GR – To whom should one report an incident of road rage when there is no independent witness?

JP – UK's birth rate is decreasing, so where is the workforce of the future coming from?

DS – How much reliance can we place on historical records?