



Monday 5th June 2017
The Lion Hotel

Summary

o Introduction

14 members attended to discuss the following topics.

Harold B

o Discussion Topics

How should we deal with our growing U3A?

- Shrewsbury U3A has 870 members and membership was continuing to increase even though there was no advertising, other than word of mouth.
- The main constraints to growth were the capacity of the room used for the main monthly meeting, the availability of venues for groups to meet, having sufficient volunteers to co-ordinate groups and to serve on the management committee.
- It was agreed that although only a quarter of the membership attended the monthly meeting, the social aspects of having this meeting were very important and it was a valuable way of introducing new members to Shrewsbury U3A.
- The growth of Shrewsbury U3A was not causing a problem at the moment and it was not necessary to consider splitting the organisation.

Should local government take over the NHS?

- A suggestion had been made in the Municipal Journal that placing the NHS under the control of local authorities was the right way to integrate health and social care and plot a way through the current crisis.
- Whilst there was support for combining health and social care services, there was no enthusiasm for giving local authorities responsibility for health services. It was considered that this would accentuate the postcode lottery which already exists in the provision of health services, as areas with a low council tax and business rate base would not have sufficient resources to fund health services.

Is the system for paying at care homes fair?

- In England, if you are moving into a care home and have more than £23,250 in savings or assets (including your property, if no one else lives there), you will usually have to pay the full cost for the care home fees. If you have less than £23,250, or your spouse or another dependent still lives in your home, you may qualify for council-funded care. It was suggested that people who could afford to pay were subsidising those who were publicly funded, and that the current arrangements were a disincentive to save.
- Local authorities were insisting on payments which were insufficient to meet costs. As 24-hour costs were very expensive some homes were charging £800-£1,000 per week, and some homes were not accommodating local authority funded people.
- There were wide variations of provision across the country. The situation was a crisis point and urgent decisions needed to be made to deal with the matter.
- It was suggested that taxes be raised to meet the additional costs of providing adequate social care, but it was pointed that hypothecated taxes had tended to be appropriated for other purposes.
- If all council taxes due were collected, this would go some way towards addressing the financial problems. However, the payment of this tax was not a priority for people with very limited incomes.
- A new scheme had been put forward whereby those people who use residential and domiciliary care will face the same charging structure. They will be assessed to get a picture of their finances and if their combined savings and property are valued at more than £100,000, they will need to pay for their care. If they wanted to hang on to their home, they could defer payment and the state will deduct the cost from their estate when they die.
- It was possible that arrangements could be sought to avoid ownership by placing property in trust.

Does the USA have the right to take independent military action regarding issues being addressed by the UN?

- The United Nations Council is composed of 15 Members:
 - 5 permanent members:
China, France, Russian Federation, United Kingdom, and the United States
 - 10 non-permanent members elected for 2-year terms by the General Assembly
Bolivia, Egypt, Ethiopia, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Senegal, Sweden, Ukraine and Uruguay
- The UN General Assembly had recently elected Côte d'Ivoire, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, Peru and Poland to fill seats to be vacated by Egypt, Japan, Senegal, Ukraine and Uruguay on 31 December, 2017.
- The question was raised as to whether any military action should be taken in a particular country if no international consensus could be reached.
- It was pointed out that military action under the auspices of the UN could not adopt a substantive resolution authorising military action if one of the permanent members

exercised a veto, for example Russia in relation to Syria and China in relation to North Korea.

- Possible areas where intervention by the UN could have avoided a worse situation were the situation arising from the breakup of Yugoslavia and in preventing the genocide in Rwanda.
- Other options could be considered other than military action, for example the deployment of peacekeepers.

Is it time for the Queen to abdicate in favour of Charles?

- The question was raised as to whether this was a matter for the country or the monarch herself to determine.
- Although in the Netherlands the monarch had abdicated in favour of their heir, this had not been the practice in the UK.
- Although some empathy was expressed for the situation that Charles was in, it was considered that an abdication was unlikely as the Queen was held in higher regard than Charles. It was stated that some members of the younger generation had suggested that, when the time came, it may be preferable for the Queen to be succeeded by William.

Should we appreciate art completely separately from the artist?

- Should art be appreciated merely on the basis of the signature on it rather than on how the piece of art appears to us? Is it possible to appreciate art irrespective of its market value?
- Should the value of a piece of art, music or poetry be regarded separately from the private life of the artist, composer or author and does that depend on whether crimes were committed recently or in the distant past?
- It was suggested that the influences on an artist's life and the period in which the work was undertaken may have some bearing on the way in which the work is appreciated.
- *These are more questions than answers - but then I know practically nothing about art except that there is a vast difference between looking at a picture briefly in an exhibition and actually acquiring one to display.*

"Until death us do part" - Is this still relevant when a baby born today has a life expectancy of 104?

- *Note the latest figures that I could find from the office of National Statistics (2013-2015) state that a new-born boy has a life expectancy of 79.1 years and a new-born girl and 82.8 years. The Institute of Actuaries states that a man aged 65 can expect to live another 22.2 years and woman a further 24.1 years. Maximum life expectancy is based on the number of times that a cell can divide (the [Hayflick Limit](#)) and there is a theoretical study suggesting that maximum life expectancy at birth is*

104 years. The longest known life with dates of birth and death verified is [Jeanne Calment](#) at 122 years.

- It was reported that to inclusion of the term 'til death us do part', in marriage vows, dated back to circa 1450.
- If people are well suited to each other that may be appropriate however long the life span. However, it should be recognised that people change and that many will have more than one partner in their lifetime.
- Women have more financial independence and it was no longer socially unacceptable for children to be born out of wedlock.
- Until fairly recently people remained in unhappy marriages because it was very difficult to obtain a divorce.
- It was suggested that very few people marrying to-day give much credence to the until death us do part vow.

Reasons to be Optimistic?

- It was suggested that the increasing lifespan of people was an indication that there had been significant improvements in recent years.
- Many expressed the view that it was very difficult to be optimistic about the current world order, but concern was expressed that dwelling on negative situations may lead to depression and mental health issues. It may be more appropriate to be realistic rather than optimistic at present.

○ Future Topics

- A list of suggested topics follows. If you have any more to suggest, especially last-minute topical issues, please email vivienne.barker@gmail.com
 - Would you be prepared to launch a drone strike against someone in Syria who is plotting bomb attacks in Britain?
 - Should airline passengers be allowed to recline their seats if it discomforts the person behind them?
 - Do you have a positive or negative impression of Wikileaks founder Julian Assange?
 - their emergency care?
 - Has Britain become a classless society?

○ Next Meeting

The next Café Society meeting will be on Monday 3rd July at 10.00am at The Lion Hotel (Tudor Bar room). Margaret H has kindly volunteered to compile the discussion summary at this meeting.

