

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Trying to mix humour with reality, my thoughts during the period of recent pleasant weather were mixed.

Mainly silence from Whitehall (perhaps the instruction to government ministers was to go away and think about how can they can return the £1.5 billion found down the back of the sofa to give to the UDP (Northern Ireland) a bonus of tax payers' money to help keep this government in place.

But knowing that the country is in deep debt, any money found down the back of the sofa should be equally spread between England, Scotland, Wales and N. Ireland to help mend their infra-structure, not paid out to keep ten DUP members of Parliament on side!

“Democracy” gone bonkers!

The “humour” for those of us who deal in much lower figures is to imagine how many noughts in £1.5 billion, and where is this money tree that can suddenly shed such rich pickings. Most of us are confused and conclude that democratic values are being abused.

No wonder we can become cynical when we see on our TV screens the terrible havoc wreaked on millions of people in poor countries, whose corrupt leaders siphon off funds provide for charitable purposes into their own bank accounts.

Many people ask: “what’s the difference?” And belief in western democracy is shaken!

So back to my thoughts in the summer so-called “silly” season. Many are expressing surprise that Boris Johnson still behaves like an Eton prankster speaking and acting in a way that raises questions about him being the Foreign Secretary.

Now the Prime Minister is telling us she is “with the workers”. Top bosses should reveal their income, and workers be represented on company boards (of course not by elected trade union representatives, but by appointed independent people).

I can't help saying “pull the other leg!” Many of these companies are owned by international consortiums -- gas, electricity, oil, motors, Google for instance.

Finally – enjoy the rest of the sunny days while you can!

UN Day of Older People : campaign stall

The UN Day of Older People is on Sunday 1 October and so we will be at the Nags Head with our campaign stall on

SATURDAY 31 SEPTEMBER 11 am at the Morrisons Arcade.

Lobby of Parliament on Wednesday 18 October.

Arrangements will be announced at the September Forum meeting and in the October newsletter.

More news on the NHS : reports from Pam Zinkin

- **“The NHS saved me. As a scientist, I must help save it.”**

Professor Stephen Hawking is our most distinguished scientist and winner of the special fundamental physics prize for lifetime achievements. On 19th August he delivered a keynote speech on the NHS at the Royal Society of Medicine (RSM). Hawking, now 75, was diagnosed with motor neurone disease at the age of 21; he said: “The NHS saved me. As a scientist, I must help save it.”

He said that public figures cherry-picked evidence, citing some studies, but suppressing others. “The crisis in the NHS has been caused by political decisions. . . . including underfunding and cuts, privatising services, the public sector pay cap, the new contract imposed on the junior doctors and removal of the student nurses’ bursary.”

Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for health, in a Guardian article, said that he did not accept Hawking’s comments on the misuse of statistics and that he (Hunt) knows which piece of research is more credible. It’s frightening to think that our NHS is in his hands and this government supports him.

Professor Sir Simon Wessely, the RSM’s president said: “. . .when a man of his (Hawking’s) extraordinary intellect, but also with his equally extraordinary experience of illness, talks about the NHS and its values, we must all pay close attention”.

- **Have you heard of the Naylor review?**
- **The prime minister told the BBC’s Andrew Neil she is backing it.**

Basically the Naylor Review says that the government can urge trusts to sell NHS land and buildings to fund the Sustainability and Transformation Plans (STPs); the review suggests that an estimated £5.7 billion can be raised through such sales. (They are also seeking loans from hedge funds and private investment companies!).

The government has announced that an additional £10 billion is being made available for capital NHS funding – not for new hospitals, equipment and staff, but to prepare NHS assets for sale to private developers. There is a huge amount of money in property for anyone who can get their hands on it, and the pressure on NHS trusts to sell is made stronger by promising increased funds if they sell, but restricting funds if they don’t.

NHS land and buildings belong to the people! But once they are sold, they are gone for ever!

Oppose government plan to accelerate rise in state pension age

On 19 July the government announced that the increase to 68 in the state pension age (SPA) would be brought forward by seven years.

Despite a report that rising life expectancy has now come to a halt for the first time in a century, the government made an unbelievable claim that everyone is living longer! This country is marked by gross health inequalities and just because someone is kept alive for a few more years does not mean they are still fit to work. In fact, for most people, only half of all years spent in retirement are in good health. If implemented, this proposal will have a terrible effect on many of those working in demanding, stressful and very physical jobs.

Most of those affected are our children – those who were born in the mid 60s and 70s. They are being told that they must work longer, pay more and get less when they retire – and the real reason is so that the government can save on pension payments. This is completely unacceptable and must be opposed before Parliament decides on the matter in 2023.

We get together with other pensioner groups (for “Sustainability and Transformation” read: Cuts and sell-offs)

On 10th August, IPF hosted a meeting of representatives of campaigning pensioners’ groups in what is called the North Central London NHS Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP).

Five people attended from Haringey representing two groups: Tottenham and Wood Green Pensioners Action Group and Hornsey Pensioners Action Group; from Enfield the Over Fifties Forum was represented and one pensioner came who lives in Barnet (although not in a local group, is a member of the Greater London Pensioners Association); there were five of us from IPF and we are now looking into possible representation from active pensioner groups in Camden and Barnet

Everybody agreed that the STP is a real and present danger – the stated purpose is to make NHS cuts of £20bn in the 44 STP areas (known as footprints) of which North Central London is one. This goes along with a “land grab”. As we all know property developers are always seeking to make a quick buck, and what better way than to get in on NHS land deals. (See Pam Zinkin’s article on page three).

“Over the counter” is how the Enfield Over 50s Forum describes the new move to end prescriptions for anything which you can buy over the counter. This is presented as things like paracetamol and drugs for hay fever etc. but many pensioners and the less well-off need expensive items which they may no longer be able to afford.

We thought that we understood “evidence-based medicine” as a normal medical practice. However, it seems that “adherence to evidence-based medicine” (AEBM) is now being presented as something new! But it is a way of introducing cuts, for there is a growing practice of limiting treatments, e.g. for hips, haemorrhoids, hernia, hearing aids and homeopathy.

We are asking members to take part in their GP Patient Participation Groups, and our committee will ensure that IPF is represented on the North Central STP Watch and make regular reports.

We are hosting another meeting of representatives on 14th September, and those present agreed that there could be other issues** for joint discussion and action which could come up at that and future meetings.

** One of these issues is to combine our delegations for the Pensioners’ Parliament next year (see page 1)

£10 all in for a Thames boat trip and a pub meal at Kew on Tuesday 12 September

Meet at Islington Town Hall at 11 am for transport to Westminster Pier.

Still time to book, so contact us by ‘phone on 020 7226 7687 (leave a message with your number for a return call).

Day Centre services for older people

The following letter was sent to the Islington Tribune on 29 August 2017

The Roundhouse Community Centre (Ronalds Road, N5) which was closed around nine years ago, is being re-built and is due to re-open in Spring 2018 providing a day centre for older people, and facilities for young people and toddlers.

This means that the services currently provided for older people at Sotheby Mews Day Centre will end as staff are transferred to the Roundhouse. But it means that the services, including the luncheon club, will continue in the new centre and that disabled elders will still be picked up in the minibuses as they are now.

On paper, as long as the services are maintained, the changeover from one to the other seems logical and not a problem. Both sites are in the Highbury East ward. But things are never so simple.

All thoughts of Sotheby's closure are a matter of great sadness for the "family" of older people who go there every week, if not every day. Many see Sotheby as a lifeline, and it is understandable that a committee of users and supporters is campaigning to save Sotheby.

Nobody should doubt that the common purpose of both the users of Sotheby Mews, their families and friends, the Council and the providers of the services (the Highbury Roundhouse Association, which pays the current staff at Sotheby Mews) is to maintain services in the face of the government's austerity measures (£95 million cuts to Islington Council already with more to come).

One proposal is that the ground floor of the new housing development planned for the Sotheby site could be a community centre. However, even if that is possible, there will be a gap between the transfer of services to the Roundhouse and the housing development at Sotheby Mews, and it would be very sad indeed if the Sotheby people stopped using the services.

In the meantime Islington Pensioners Forum sees that there is an access problem with the Roundhouse. It is situated at the Highbury Fields end of Ronalds Road meaning that there is quite a walk from bus stops at Highbury Corner, Highbury Grove and Holloway Road. Therefore we are asking the Council, Highbury Roundhouse Association and Sotheby Mews users and supporters to join us in a request for a bus service (there used to be a hop-on-hop-off bus) so that older people can have easy access to the services at the new Roundhouse when it opens in Spring 2018.

INFORMATION

BINGO every Monday.....1 pm Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN

Every Wednesday.....1 pm lunch and a chat in the IPF hall (address above)

Every Wednesday.....3 – 4 pm IT and Smart Phones – learn how to use them
Sessions by “Healthy Generations” IPF hall

Tuesday 12 September.....Boat Trip – see page 4

Thursday 21 September.....Forum meeting – transport needs of new older people’s
10.30 a.m. Islington centre.
Town Hall

Saturday 31 September.....UN Day of Older People campaign stall (see page 2)

Wednesday 18 October.....Lobby of Parliament (details in next newsletter)

ISLINGTON PENSIONERS FORUM

1a Providence Court, Providence Place, N1 0RN

Telephone: 020 7226 7687

Email ipf@islingtonpensionersforum.org

Office open on Monday and Wednesday 10.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. (but please call us first)

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