

Time for Love, Life and Laughter

Sir Peter Bottomley MP

Worthing Herald and Littlehampton Gazette Article

19th November 2020

The Radio Times magazine panel of judges say that the only comedy series funnier than Hancock's Half Hour (1954-59) or Round The Horne (1965-68) has been I'm Sorry I haven't a Clue (running since 1972). The only task harder than being a parent is trying to explain to a foreign visitor the rules or the lack of rules for the Mornington Crescent game.

Adrian Edmondson of The Young Ones described the winner as the "most ridiculous, most surreal, most incomprehensibly funny show on any medium". Steve Punt said it is so funny because no political points are made, nor targets attacked. The truth was that the long-time chair Humphrey Lyttelton gave the opening minutes to insulting the hometown's audience before smearing each local rival. Remind you of political parties?

One parliamentary colleague would win any competition for being assiduous with unfailing courtesy and activity. Jim Shannon, farmer and Unionist MP for Strangford, noted that Friday was World Kindness Day. He encouraged all to act with kindness and gentleness in how we treat those we agree with and those with whom we disagree. Be an example of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

On Thursday I asked the Leader of the House about reforms to protect residential leaseholders. Our colleague Tracey Crouch asked to be allowed to speak in the debate on breast cancer treatment. She is in the middle of aggressive treatment. During the first C-19 restrictions, MPs could speak remotely in debates.

Jacob Rees-Mogg announced a review that could ease our rule. I spoke powerful lines about the need to do so. They were what he had said, in a different context, the previous week, arguing the other way. Often our words can be relevant when we change our understanding. That is what engaging debate is for: open minds as much as open mouths.

This week I am in a university discussion with Jonathan Heawood of IMPRESS and impressive professor Brian Cathcart. I disagree with their preferred system of press regulation. I agree with Lionel Barber, former Financial Times editor, that media must have the freedom to be wrong, or to appear to be wrong, that more people should know the care that goes into presenting new interesting important information and views, and that it is a miracle that so much that is worth reading can be included in each day's or week's newspaper.

There are significant World Days coming up. They include World Children's Day about support for children in conflict areas, White Ribbon Day for people to stand up, speak out and say no to violence against women, and in early December the Day for People with Disabilities.

For years I supported the distinguished Labour MP Jack Ashley and Conservative Sir John Hannam who received awards for sustained practical changes to reduce the impact of a disability. This recalls a truth about David Blunkett. What did he do for people with disabilities? He showed you can still achieve, overcoming handicap.

I was encouraged to stand for election by Ian Fraser, another blind MP for 18 years who became the first life peer. He gave valuable humorous advice to Virginia and to me. He had a clue.

Encouraging reports come of vaccines that may make it possible to combat Covid-19 effectively. My parents' generation feared smallpox and polio. Modern health preserving treatments are giving hope. Meanwhile let us do what we can to reduce transmission risks, help others, care for the economy – and share good humour.