

# Things Are Seldom What They Seem

*Sir Peter Bottomley MP*

*Worthing Herald and Littlehampton Gazette Article*

*26<sup>th</sup> August 2021*

We could amend the famous song by Gilbert and Sullivan to Things are Seldom All They Seem. The dialogue and the duet between The Captain and Buttercup matter to me since I was part of a family production of HMS Pinafore.

'Stern conviction's o'er (us) stealing, That the mystic lady's dealing, In oracular revealing.'

Absolutism is not my approach to many things. I look to understand when I am mistaken, when I am wrong, when I can learn from someone with whom I have disagreed or to whom I may have been disagreeable. Sorry.

Public and political service is best with the belief and understanding of overlap. We need choice between political leaders and top teams. We need ways to recover from bad decisions or disasters. The difference between reasonably democratic countries and authoritarian regimes of left or right or of no ideology is that we can dismiss our rulers. They go; they leave Downing street and can remain safely to try again or to live quietly.

My choice is to stand aside from passing fashions and persistent disruptions. Demonstrations? Yes. Revolution or Rebellion? No, thank you. I learnt in the early 1970s that energy strikes hurt the vulnerable most. We cared for elderly neighbours. One old woman has a scuttle of coal and some candles during a time without electricity. She had survived the 1926 General Strike.

In recent days, bully boys of anti-vaccination protestors shoved into BBC, Channel 4 News and Google offices. Self-named rebels in XR have taken again to the streets. It is odd that elected representatives can be called to account over minor changes in standards of living or health care or environmental improvement or climate threats while news attention is demanded by people responding to social media calls for assembly in ways that can do major harm, with substantial costs to the public.

Night and day media rightly cover developments in Kabul. Spare time could report on the disasters in Haiti where usually grim lives have been trashed by murder of their president, uncounted deaths from the recent earthquake and problems multiplied by severe tropical storms.

Learn from climate change activists' concerns while arguing against their publicity-seeking disruption. Try to understand the knowledge or lack of it in the minds of those worried about health protection advances whilst condemning attacks on the free media.

People may have varying recollections of Greenpeace. Their goal is to ensure the ability of the Earth to nurture life in all its diversity. During 50 years working for the environment and peace, it has been known for direct actions. There is debate amongst the founders about how it began; it evolved.

I am pleased to go with Greenpeace to the central English Channel to understand more about the environmentally important Wight-Barfleur Reef. Three times the size of the Isle of Wight, it is an MPA, marine protected area. We shall see if there is illegal fishing.

Instead of finding a reason to stand away from campaigning groups, I can do more good by listening and then working together on the many topics of agreement. I do the same with people in other political parties.

Often it helps to understand a group's history. Extinction Rebellion seems to be acting out a higher degree by Roger Haslam. Greenpeace started with objections to a nuclear test at a seismic fault.

When the world is awful, I reread how Gilbert and Sullivan came together to transform popular entertainment.