

WINTER DIRECTIVE 1984

Dear Observer,

Do not be alarmed if this overlaps with the Autumn Directive on the American connection. We are posting early to avoid the worst of the Christmas mail and I certainly do not expect to hear from you until after Christmas.

The theme of this Directive is Relatives, Friends, and Neighbours; who are they, where are they, what do we expect of them and they of us? The categories are not always distinct in actual experience - neighbours may also be friends, relatives may be neighbours; where the dividing lines are blurred in your experience please do say so. Please do remember that although I have often put the suggested topics in the form of questions, please do not take them as questions in the strict sense but rather as possible starting points for you to expand upon.

1. Relatives. Most of us have active relationships of some sort with only some of the relatives whom we know exist. This is a real question: How many relatives altogether have you? It doesn't matter whether you have forgotten their names and know nothing about them other than their existence. Don't list them all, just give the number. Now, among these with whom do you maintain contact of any sort, and what sort of contact is it - 'phone, post, visits, and are such contacts regular or irregular? How strong are the bonds of kinship in your family in the wider sense of the word? Is there some sense of obligation to attend weddings, funerals and major anniversaries, and if there is how widely is the obligation felt? As far as your cousins? In general are there certain things which you would expect of a relative which you would not ask of a friend? Does your experience of the past contrast markedly with your present experience of the way relatives should or do behave to each other?

2. Friends. How would you define the word 'friend' and is there a difference between that definition and the way in which you actually use the word? Are there different kinds of friends e.g friends at work, business friends, friends in Australia? In conversation do you distinguish between 'friends' and 'acquaintances'? There are other words: 'mate', 'chum', 'pal' etc; if you use any of these, in what contexts do you use them? (By the way do 'china', 'buddy', 'mucker' and 'cobber' still survive in use?). What do we expect of friends and what do they expect of us? Are some (all?) friends closer than relatives. if they are what do we mean by closer? If friends are invited do we tidy up before they come and if so, how much? Do we care about our personal appearance in front of friends e.g makeup, shaving, dress - how much? Are there people whom we think of as friends whom it would not occur to us to invite home. Are there friends whom you would not fail to invite to otherwise 'family' occasions?

PLEASE TURN OVER

3. Neighbours. How do you use the word? Narrowly to refer to the people next door, or more generally? How generally? Would you refer to anyone living in your neighbourhood as a 'neighbour'? How would you define your neighbourhood, if you think of yourself as having one, that is. What do we expect of neighbours - and now I mean those who actually live next door or only a few doors away - and what relationships do we actually have with them e.g milk borrowing; taking in deliveries; feeding the cat; keeping an eye on things when we are away; looking after the children 'for half an hour'; keeping a spare front door key. Or do we expect nothing other than a conventional greeting if we happen to meet? In general does there seem to be a general etiquette in your immediate neighbourhood governing behaviour between people? What in your opinion and experience are the major causes of bad relations between neighbours? Please do try to give specific examples in your discussion of these topics and, once again, if you can recall examples or rules of 'neighbourly behaviour' in the past which have vanished or changed, please do so.

So - another very successful year is coming to an end. Thanks and congratulations are due to all of you. Very best wishes for Christmas and 1985.

From

David Pocock and Dorothy Sheridan