

LARK HARBOUR

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ABOUT THE OUTER BAY OF ISLANDS, NEWFOUNDLAND

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THIS WINTER IN LARK HARBOUR

MOST PEOPLE IN NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR have seen enough of winter 2015 by now. But please spare a thought for those poor expatriates who have been forced to spend the winter in the southern United States, or perhaps some place in Australia or Africa where snow isn't a word at all, let alone a dirty word. Quite a few expatriates see the BMD every issue. Those of us lucky enough to have spent the winter in our beautiful Province will be fortunate enough in future years to be able to tell our as-yet-unborn descendants about the Winter of 2015 when the Polar Vortex got stuck for weeks over Eastern Canada, including Newfoundland & Labrador, with record-breaking cold temperatures, violent winds, and snowfalls the likes of which even the old-timers had trouble recalling.

Of course, we have all seen Bottle Cove (above left) and the entire Bay of Islands frozen solid, but it still remains a wonderful sight. The road into Bottle Cove (above right) also is quite impressive with the deep snowbank pushed up by the plough. And then there's my house (right) with snow piled up against the front door. You can just see the top of the door to the right of the power entry near the middle of the picture.



I'm hoping that by the time I come home the tons of snow in my front yard will be thawed and gone, and I'll be able to use that door. But the one certain thing is that I personally have never seen so much snow in my yard.

Thanks to Mrs Norma Pickett who sent these pictures to me.

CUTBACKS, SPENDING, AND THE EXCHANGE OF WEALTH

Editor's Note

This month's BMD may look a little boring, except maybe for the front page, and my only excuse is that, being still confined to hospital, I have no opportunity to go and see what the outdoors really looks like. Yes, I can look out of my window, and I have enjoyed some spectacular displays of snowploughing by the gentleman who operates the big yellow machine that clears the parking area outside my window during the night, but I couldn't get any pictures, and anyway, everyone except me has probably seen more than enough of snowploughs this winter. Being an impatient patient is not really a great inspiration to write, either, but writing helps to pass the time. So I have put together a few opinion pieces (call them rants if you want) and of course you don't have to read them if you don't feel like it. But maybe you will find some of them a bit entertaining or thought-provoking. What distinguishes us from the animals is our ability to think, so I have tried to cash in on this. Anyway, that is my excuse.

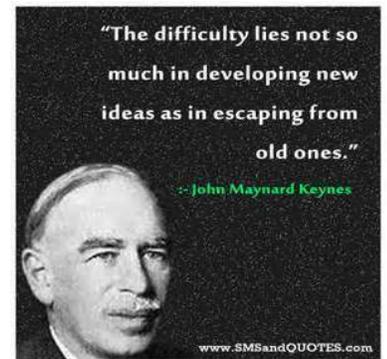
SLH

I'm not an economist. I have never studied economics. But I think I have a basic understanding about how the money system in the so-called "free markets" works. You don't have to be a genius to know that for a country's economy to function reasonably well, there has to be the exchange of wealth. And the exchange of wealth, in cash or in kind or in a combination of both, requires trade.

This is precisely what is wrong with a government policy that reduces taxes when the economy is under pressure. Usually the main beneficiaries of reduced taxes are the wealthier sections of the population, simply because they pay the most tax, but they are the ones who least need it. Those same wealthier people often save the tax they receive back, or they buy expensive imported goods or foreign holidays which add very little to the economy. The poorer people get very little benefit, because if you aren't paying much tax, you won't be getting much tax back. So a government that insists on reducing taxes is not helping the economy, nor will it be able to create jobs by spending on new infrastructure. Instead, they may simply be pandering to the segment of the electorate they view as "theirs", usually the wealthier people who support the party financially. When a *minority* of the electorate controls the *majority* of the national wealth, then obviously the less fortunate end up with a tiny fraction of the wealth: a very unfair and uneven distribution in any country. But this is how it is in Canada and indeed in most of the developed nations, with the less developed nations following closely in the same footsteps.

The present Conservative government of Stephen Harper has espoused the principle that when the economy is hard pressed, then government must economise. Hence cutbacks are applied across the board in the misguided idea that austerity is needed until the economy recovers. This looks like a logical plan, and indeed it is so for families and some small businesses, for both need to protect themselves against extravagant spending in times of recession. A family that runs itself into debt is most likely to remain in such a state unless luck is very clearly on its side. Buying an expensive motor home, for example, or taking a costly world cruise, may be enjoyable, but it will not help you get out of debt, because neither will bring you extra revenue in the ordinary course of events.

However the opposite is true for a country. If a nation plans carefully to spend on *appropriate* infrastructure, this will generate new jobs, and people with jobs spend money, exchanging their wealth for the items they buy. The key, however, is in the word "appropriate". Money spent on infrastructure items such as new roads, bridges, transportation facilities, water and sewer facilities, dams, etc, and even recreational and entertainment facilities, will provide improved conditions for the growth and development of industry. This is easily seen in the construction phase when, for example, a new dam provides employment for hundreds, maybe thousands, of individuals in a huge variety of jobs, skilled and less skilled, whose families in turn buy food, clothing, appliances, use transportation, and help create yet more jobs for even more people. Then when the construction phase is complete, an unending variety of industries from obvious ones like manufacturing and exploitation of natural resources to tourism and vacation industries will also appear. The [Tennessee Valley Authority](#) and the [Hoover Dam](#) (see [picture](#)) in the USA are typical examples. It was projects such as these that helped to bring the USA out of the dirty thirties. They became assets of immense value to this day, eighty years since their construction.



This "spending" approach to economic recovery is largely the brainchild of British economist John Maynard Keynes (1883 - 1946). The following paragraph quoted from [WiseGEEK](#) summarises the essentials of [Keynesianism](#):

Keynesian economics warns against the practice of too much saving and not enough consumption, or spending, in an economy. It also supports considerable redistribution of wealth, when needed. Keynesian economics further concludes that there is a pragmatic reason for the massive redistribution of wealth: if the poorer segments of society are given sums of money, they will likely spend it, rather than save it, thus promoting economic growth. Another central idea of Keynesian economics is that trends in the macroeconomic level can disproportionately influence consumer behavior at the micro-level.

(From [WiseGEEK](#))

During the 1930s and after World War Two, the Keynesian economic philosophy was very influential. Germany was virtually destroyed by 1945 so, in order to avoid the growth of another society where poverty had encouraged the rise of Hitler and Nazism during the 1930s, the victorious nations, especially USA in West Germany, but also the Soviet Union in East Germany, devised reconstruction programs to aid Germany. In West Germany, known as [The Marshall Plan](#) and powered by financial support from the USA, the program was extremely effective, as demonstrated particularly by the Volkswagen Motor Company whose products were exported all over the world, especially to the USA. East Germany under the USSR was not so successful.

→ CONTINUED on page 3 →

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The Keynesian philosophy as exemplified in the Marshall Plan was largely responsible for West Germany's economic recovery. The same approach was also applied in UK and other countries of Western Europe, but with limited success compared with Germany, perhaps because Germany received enormous support from the powerful USA economy which had actually benefited from the war.

Since the 1980s, the days of [Thatcherism](#) in the UK and [Reaganism](#) in the USA, English-speaking countries began to reject the concept of government intervention, reverting to the earlier belief that market forces will take care of everything. Today this approach is often called economic [Neoliberalism](#), an economic movement, not to be confused with political liberalism. ❖

In the UK and the USA, and more recently in Canada under Harper, the idea of leaving the economy to market forces has been elevated almost to a sacred belief. This has sometimes led to conflict between left- and right-wing proponents resulting as in Canada in a polarisation between the left and right philosophies. The 2008 disagreement between the Harper government and the opposition under Dion, Duceppe and Layton, increased that polarisation and resulted in prorogation by Harper, followed by an election in which Harper won another minority government. Since that time, Canadian party positions have tended to solidify even more, so that Conservatives support a market force or Neoliberal economy while NDP and Liberals favour a more Keynesian or traditional liberal approach.

A comparable situation has developed in the USA, evidenced in the conflict between Barack Obama and the Tea Party element of the Republicans who have tried at every turn to block Obama's plans to provide affordable health care for all Americans, regardless of their ability to pay. The UK, under Margaret Thatcher's government, has also dismantled much of the social structure developed there since the Second World War. In both cases these movements represent a return to free enterprise principles, leaving the less fortunate members of society to fend for themselves.

The Muskrat Falls project of Newfoundland and Labrador is a modern example of Keynesian social spending. We know that the Island of Newfoundland is short of electrical power both for homes and to supply industry. Usage of electrical power will increase everywhere in the future, and until more clean renewable sources (such as wind, solar, tidal) are reliably on stream, hydro generation is the most viable alternative. However, despite the wealth injected through the offshore oil industry, this Province cannot finance a megaproject like Muskrat Falls, so it must borrow if it wishes to go ahead. We are hearing criticism from politicians and others who oppose the project on the grounds that it is too costly and will place Newfoundland & Labrador into debt for a generation or more. But the benefits to accrue from this project can be comparable to those of the Hoover Dam and the Tennessee Valley Authority which changed their regions from unproductive semidesert or "hillbilly" neighbourhoods to productive areas able to support themselves and contribute to the American national economy. Muskrat Falls offers this Province a similar future, comparable to the one Smallwood visualised in Churchill Falls, but which was frustrated by [Québec's intransigence](#).

Labrador has a wealth of hydro potential, and eastern Canada needs it. The US market Hydro-Québec so unfairly succeeded in

wresting from Newfoundland & Labrador in the Smallwood era has since increased and includes the Maritime provinces, and Labrador electricity will soon be satisfying the shortfall with a new source of power supplying all parts of Atlantic Canada, including Newfoundland & Labrador, and also the north-eastern American states. The project is undeniably expensive, but on completion, when the first megawatts begin to flow and we experience the benefits in our Province, the costs will begin to appear reasonable, since [inflation](#), always a factor in the long term, will inevitably modify the cost. The huge investment incurred during construction will become less intimidating, and cost to the consumer should stabilise as have Hydro-Québec's costs, which are expected to increase very little from the present \$0.24¢/kWh. (NOTE: This does not mean that Muskrat Falls power will sell for that price; but as with Churchill Falls, the starting kWh price should not increase much in the long term.)

Our governments must therefore ensure that proper financing is secured and controlled, that contracts are precisely written and not signed under duress as was the original Churchill Falls contract, and that contractors are carefully selected. Additionally, Newfoundland & Labrador must never again submit to the kind of blackmail that was applied in the 1960s by Hydro-Québec, even if it would mean postponing development of the resource for a generation. SLH

❖ Economics is the study of markets, business, finance, etc
Politics is the study of government and its policies.

RESOURCE DOCUMENTS - These hyperlinks direct you to articles in newspapers or other sources where you may find additional information if you wish.

[Revenge is a bad business plan, Newfoundland](#) - Konrad Yakabuski, Globe & Mail, Sat, Jul 27, 2013 Newspaper article, 865 words.

[Churchill Falls and the quality of Quebec's mercy](#) - Jeffrey Simpson, Globe & Mail, Fri, Aug 16, 2013 Newspaper article, 820 words.

[Smallwood, Churchill Falls, and the Power Corridor through Quebec](#) - James P. Feehan, Memorial University. *Acadiensis: Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region*, Vol. XL, No. 2 Summer/Autumn - Été/Automne 2011. This is a collection of notes for an academic paper. It is some 9,000 words in length, or about 11 pages, including 3 pages of references, many to contemporary documents, and will provide answers to questions frequently asked.

READERS PLEASE COMMENT

Readers will have noticed that many key items in the BMD are highlighted as [Hyperlinks](#). By clicking these when your computer is logged into an active Internet connection, you may access additional information on the topic. Use of the Hyperlinks is of course optional. Sometimes they may not work, if the websites they reference have been relocated or if they are outdated or incorrect.

**If you like the Hyperlinks and find them useful,
please let me know by sending a brief email to me at
blowmedowner@gmail.com.**

If you don't let me know,
the Hyperlinks may be discontinued in future issues.

CAN TRUTH BE STRANGER THAN FICTION?

SOMETIMES IT CAN. An example might be the story of the *Habakkuk*, the gigantic aircraft carrier that was mooted for construction by the British and American governments in 1942. The interesting and perhaps incredible point about the *Habakkuk* was that it was going to be built of ice. If you never heard of it before, refer to the front page article of [The Blow•Me•Downer Issue 88 for March 2015](#), where you can see a picture and read further about the project.

There are however many more such surprising things throughout history, and recently I found myself investigating a few others. One that I found of interest (due perhaps to spending the last three months in hospital) was that urine once had a practical use in the tanning of leather, up to Medieval times and even later: the animal skin was soaked in urine to remove hair and grease. Of course, in today's tanning industry other chemicals that don't have the unsavoury associations and odours of urine are now used. But for centuries urine was collected as an essential ingredient in the preparation of leather for king and commoner alike.

That is just one example of many surprising facts. If you care to read about a few others, visit [Tishasweetcandy's blog](#). I came upon it by accident while investigating into the leather tanning business, but there are other interesting items too. Some of the facts about 15th Century personal hygiene, as well as some of the culinary practices back then, are quite fascinating. And do you know why weddings traditionally took place in June? The answer may surprise you.

A TRADITIONAL CULINARY TREAT

While reading [Tisha's blog](#) I was somehow reminded of how we made sausages when I was a young boy in England. Some of the details may also, like some tanning techniques, come as a shock to those who are not acquainted with the traditional practices of sausage production. These days the skins are usually made with readily available processed or synthetic plasticky material, but the best sausages are made using *all natural products*, not factory produced items treated with heaven-only-knows-what. Even so, many modern chefs would never dream of stepping back in time and using genuine traditional sausage skins that our ancestors used from time immemorial: [the intestines of the actual animal whose meat will be filling those skins](#). I doubt if Schneiders or Maple Leaf would use them either.

I have vivid memories from childhood of when our family raised a pig each year and slaughtered it in the fall. The slaughtering process was decidedly unpleasant and a rather messy procedure, but if you want to eat meat of any animal, it has to be dead first (exception: lobster?). We had a wealth of delicious products from our pig, including pork itself, chops, ham, bacon, trotters (not everyone's favourite, of course), brawn (also known as 'head cheese'), pork pies, sausage rolls and many strings of pork sausages. Being English, my family was never very adventurous in food preparation, but what we ate was highly nutritious and always assiduously prepared and supervised at every stage of the process by my Grandmother.

To return now to sausages. The skins—the pig's intestines—were perhaps 20 metres/60ft long and had to be cut into manageable lengths and thoroughly cleaned. In the early days when we had no running water in the house, the intestines were taken into the backyard where the drinking water pump was, and each length of intestine was firmly

held on the pump nozzle. Water was then pumped under pressure through the section of intestine. When I was old enough, that was my job. It became much easier and more fun when we finally connected to the municipal water system, because the intestine could be held over the nozzle of the tap and the water turned on with much more pressure. It was fascinating to see the length of intestine filling up with water whose pressure soon caused it to twist and swirl like something alive as the clean water flushed out the last traces of porcine excrement. Grandmother would then examine each one and if it passed muster it would be placed in a bowl; if not, it would be returned for another washing, and even a third one, perhaps, until Grandmother's fastidious standards were satisfied.

Meanwhile, the meat for the sausage filling was being prepared. It was carefully sorted, chopped into chunks, and seasonings were added. The big old cast-iron mincing machine was bolted firmly to the kitchen table, the cutters and crank handle assembled on the barrel of the machine, a length of sausage skin threaded on the tin trumpet piece, carefully, to avoid punctures or other damage, and the sausages would then be created. This was where my other job came in: I was the one who cranked the big handle. The meat was fed steadily into the funnel on top of the drum, and as I cranked the handle the screw inside the drum turned and the meat was slowly forced through the cutters, along the funnel, and into the sausage skins. The skins had to be controlled so that they were neither too full nor not full enough, and slowly the sausage began to "grow" from the funnel. That finished, the long sausage would be laid out on the table, doubled in half, and the links created at the desired length, usually about four or five inches (about 12cm), by twisting the doubled sausages around each other. Grandmother usually did that job. The twisting would cause the meat to be compressed slightly, giving the links a firm, rounded look, and all roughly the same length.

We had no refrigerator in those days, so the sausages and much of the rest of the meat would be suspended from big hooks attached to the ceiling of the cellar, if you had one, or the pantry, if you didn't, with the meat wrapped in muslin bags near the Christmas pudding.

Preparing the pig products was a major undertaking, perhaps occupying a few days. But our neighbours also usually raised a pig each year. So when we were inundated with unprocessed meat, we would share it among the neighbours, and then perhaps a couple of weeks later, they would share their unprocessed pig products with us. That way maybe three or four families would work together to process the meat quickly to prevent spoilage, and have all the work finished long before preparations for Christmas had to begin.

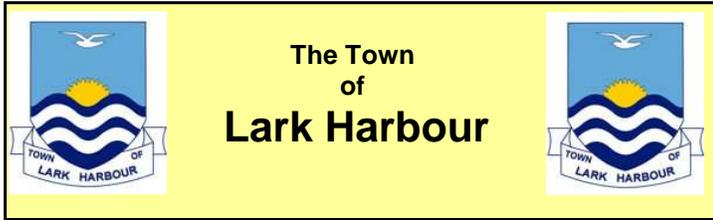
"Give us a bash

At the bangers and mash

Me muvver used to make"



[Turn on your audio for this link to hear a song by Peter Sellars and Sophia Loren, 1961](#)



The Town of Lark Harbour

Report of Monthly Council Meeting of 2015 March 30

Present: Mayor : Jamie Park
 Deputy Mayor: Jeremiah Barry
 Councillors: Dennis Sheppard, Rose Sheppard,
 Olivia Spurrell
 Clerks: Peggy Sheppard, Joanna Pottle (Rec)

Meeting commenced at 6:30pm

- ! New Council member Olivia Spurrell sworn in.
- ! Minutes of Meeting of 2015 February 16 adopted.
- ! Amalgamation: Council is hoping to schedule a teleconference with the Minister of Municipal and Intergovernmental Affairs with regards to our Amalgamation process in the near future. Clerks directed to go ahead and apply for a JCP for upgrades to the fire hall to accommodate our new truck.
- ! ByElection of 2015 March 30 : 75 votes cast. 49 votes-Olivia Spurrell, 21 votes-Kimberley Herritt, 5 votes-Deana Keetch.
- ! Crown Land Applications currently on file for Harbour View Road and Birchy Hill Road to be deferred until June meeting pending more information on water and sewer project.
- ! Property at Devils Head: Council agreed to keep in contact with Public Works by replying to the email that was sent.
- ! Global GeoPark will have no effect on any industry that may wish to come to our community.
- ! CEEP: The grant is now completed and final report sent. Mayor will contact MHA Eddie Joyce regarding extra funds for material costs.
- ! Kids Summer Camp set for July 27-31. Clerks to inquire about ages of children eligible.
- !
- ! Dilapidated Properties: Agreed to send letters to property owners whose homes are in deplorable condition.
- ! Canada Post: Council viewed letter from Canada Post.
- ! Financial Report approved with Write-offs of \$285.00.
- ! Insurance Policy Renewal to be paid as presented.
- ! Summer Student Grants – Agreed to apply before deadlines of April 17 for Post-Secondary and May 01 for High School.
- ! Ice Control Material 2015-2016 – Clerk to follow up with Department of Transportation and Works.
- ! Training/Workshops – Clerks gave brief overview of Basic Emergency Management and Emergency Operations Centre training in which they recently participated; they will contact Fire and Emergency Services regarding council participation in a tabletop exercise.
- ! Brief discussion on office closures due to clerk training. Council will advertise for a secondary acting clerk for times when current acting clerk is unavailable. Competition will begin Wednesday,

April 01 and will run for 2 weeks. Interviews will then be conducted.

- ! Agreed to contact Bell Aliant regarding cell service, as well as having extra phone jacks installed in the Town Hall in the event that we need an EOC.
- ! Letter sent regarding snow clearing complaints.
- ! Dog complaint received and addressed.
- ! Clerk to contact Murphy Brothers for spring clean up date. Letter from resident requesting it be mid-late May due to late spring weather.
- ! Brief discussion on World Oceans Day – Clerk to follow up with DFO and to advise St James School of this event.
- ! Due to recent office closures the discount date for early tax payment will be extended to Friday April 10.
- ! Clerk to update website and facebook page regarding \$20.00 Fire Department donation.
- ! Correspondence received from **Outer Bay of Islands Enhancement Committee** regarding damage to parking lot fixtures during storm last fall and requesting assistance to have parking lot restored. Council had previously agreed to provide necessary assistance.
- ! Correspondence from Labour Markets Board regarding a ceremony to be held on April 28th. This will be further discussed once information package is received.
- ! Council will provide \$200.00 for annual website maintenance.
- ! Council will write another letter to Department of Transportation and Works regarding condition of Route 450.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50pm.

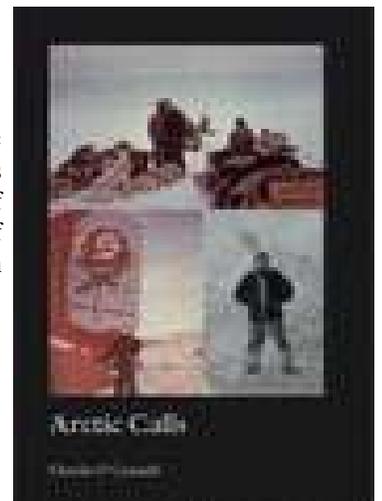
ARCTIC CALLS by Dr Charlie O'Connell

The retired doctor, a nostalgic exile from the Bay of Islands, is pleased to announce his book of memoirs devoted to his years of service in the Canadian North during WW2.

*ARCTIC CALLS
is published by
Blurb Canada.*

To Preview and Order it

[CLICK HERE](#)



The BLOW•ME•DOWNER

**is happy to support Dr Charlie's recent work.
We wish him every success with his publication.**

Editorial: **The NIQAB
to wear it or not to wear it?**

The *niqab*, pronounced “nick-ab”, is an item of clothing worn by many Muslim women; typically it covers the entire head except for an opening over the wearer’s eyes. It has recently become a controversial item due to a court case in Quebec over the wearing of the garment during a Canadian Citizenship Oath Ceremony. A candidate scheduled to take the oath had chosen to wear a *niqab*, but was instructed by the Citizenship Judge to remove it. When she refused, she was denied the right to take the oath.



Niqab photo by zeenat_02, Photobucket

Many people seem to be of the opinion that Islam requires women to wear the *niqab*, but this is not the case. The Quran does not require it, although some kind of a veil appears to have been suggested under certain circumstances. (See [Does the Quran require women to wear the Veil?](#)) Some countries require by law that certain clothes be worn, especially by women, but there are no such dress requirements in Canada, even when swearing an oath to the Queen. Some officials such as police and the military are also required to wear uniforms as part of their jobs. So the only comparable issue to occur in Canada was in 1990 when [Baltej Singh Dhillon](#), a Sikh member of the RCMP, received permission to wear a *turban* as part of his uniform. The big difference of course is that the *niqab* conceals the entire face and head, except the eyes, while the *turban* is simply a headdress which conceals no more than a conventional hat does. The above picture is fairly typical of how the *niqab* is worn, and it is easy to understand that some objection could be raised that it may be difficult to identify the wearer. This seems to be the only reasonable objection that could warrant debate, although some might also feel that any person who wishes to become a Canadian citizen should be prepared to accept required conditions. However no such official conditions exist for the oath: the ‘requirement’ was imposed by the judge.

Unfortunately the incident has inflamed the current debate relating to Muslim immigrants. Conservative MP Larry Miller commented openly that [“If you’re not willing to show your face, then stay the hell where you came from.”](#) Stephen Harper also commented that the *niqab* is “rooted in a culture that is anti-women.” It’s sad that Canada’s most senior government and even its leader would associate itself with these narrow-minded approaches at a time when the Muslim community at large is particularly sensitive and is being unfairly criticised for anti-Canadian activities which are being perpetrated by only a very tiny minority of individuals. After all, it isn’t long since women had very secondary places in Christianity.

Meanwhile, the Muslim lady in question, [Zunera Ishaq](#), has stated that she would be willing to remove her *niqab* to confirm her identity, while presumably preserving her religious belief that she should not expose her face in public. One assumes that this ought to be a reasonable solution to satisfy both parties in the argument.

On another aspect of this issue, many people these days would say that to be concerned over such a superficial matter as whether or not

to wear the *niqab*, or for that matter any other garment that is worn for religious observation, is irrelevant practice in today’s wide-open western culture. But we need to bear in mind that for many individuals arriving here from countries where conservative dressing is more widely practiced, it is likely to be a matter of severe personal discomfort to conform to our more liberal modes of dress. Remember the comments that used to be made about women in miniskirts, or tight jeans, and even men sporting beards, a generation or two ago? Times change, and we must change with them. But we must also respect the wishes and the social comfort of those who have not yet acclimatised themselves to more liberal dress codes than those prevailing in the old country.

I recall a time when some Christian churches, especially RC or those of more “Roman” persuasion, looked askance at women who entered the church without some kind of head covering, or even a veil. You might even hear disapproving mutterings of “Jezebel”, when a woman was seen to be disregarding the rule. In deference to this requirement, many women would carry a little lace head cover or veil which they slipped on their heads when entering the building, and off again on leaving. The only documentation about head coverings is from St Paul in *1 Corinthians 11, 4-5* :

Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head. But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

This belief still prevails among a few Christian sects, though it has largely been discontinued in all but the strictest or most traditional congregations.

What it boils down to in the end is that we all should respect the feelings and wishes of other members of our society, whether we agree with them or not, with the one proviso that our words or behaviour should not threaten or endanger our fellow citizens. Some would even extend the proviso to include not offending or upsetting them. And of course our fellow citizens should respect equally our reasonable words or behaviour.

With regard to the *niqab* issue, it should be possible to find a solution which can satisfy both sides without offence. But what so often happens is that feelings escalate from mild objection, through indignation, into open criticism and beyond, even into public ostracism or condemnation. Without that care and consideration for our fellow citizens, we run the risk of the escalation of feelings, especially if those feelings become part of the public platform of a political group, and we are then on the slippery downward slope towards totalitarianism, from where it is but a very short step to persecution and dictatorship. This danger is particularly apparent in situations like that of the *niqab* or the *turban*, where an item of clothing, innocent in itself, can become symbolic of an entire race or creed. Often readily identifiable, [Muslims are particularly at risk of being singled out](#), even victimised in this way.

In conclusion we should cherish our right of free speech and expression, be prepared to enter into rational and peaceful debate with any other Canadian on any issues, controversial or not, and ensure that the [Rights and Freedoms of the Charter](#) are always protected, especially as applied to minorities. SLH

Please feel free to comment on this or any other editorial material in this publication. Comments will be published in the next BMD.

TO WAR . . . OR . . . NOT TO WAR

ONCE MORE, in only the second decade of this century, Canadians are faced with the decision of whether or not to go to war. At least, we should be faced with the decision. But despite the frequent vociferous and fiery debate in the House of Commons, it is far from certain whether *We, the People*, are going to have much chance to have our opinions heard, and even less chance of their being heeded. As on other issues such as the question of cutbacks vs spending (page 2 in this BMD), only the Opposition parties seem to be taking any notice of what we might think or want, and the Harper Government regularly ignores the Opposition anyway.

During televised Commons Question Periods, which is about the closest to a debate we get these days, Harper's limited inner circle who agree with him on just about everything, sit comfortably in their plush seats, nodding acquiescence with his every word until he telegraphs the end of a sentence when, like a group of zombies, they stand and applaud until the zombie master telegraphs another command, and down they all collapse in their green plush seats again until the next signal is given, at which point the whole tedious procedure repeats itself.

So is there going to be a real debate on possible war with Syria? It doesn't look like it. Harper continues his tactics of ignoring any opposition, or at best deflecting the questions by giving an answer that bears almost no relationship to the question being asked. What a wonderful democracy we now have in this country!

On the question of "*Should we send our soldiers and our airmen and women against Syria?*" we are really no wiser now than we were six months ago when our armed forces were first deployed in the Middle East.

As Elizabeth May so ably put it in [her speech in the House of Commons on Thursday March 26](#), "*We should be doing much more to get the countries in that region, themselves threatened by ISIS, to take on the ISIS threat.*" She also goes on to say that much more needs to be done for the four million Syrian refugees, to stem the flow of weapons and money to the terrorists and, by taking the threat of terrorism seriously, working to end it. Unfortunately at this point Ms May finishes her speech with the words, "*This mission does not do that.*" Perhaps she was unable to continue further because of the speaking time limitations placed on her as the Green Party leader with only two elected members in the House of Commons.

If she had the time, she may have elaborated on how she would propose to get the countries of that region to take on the ISIS threat in a bigger way. One option might be to provide humanitarian funding to assist the refugees because, left on their own, thousands will perish, and if so, western nations, Canada included, are likely to lose what credibility they may still have in this scene of devastation. This will play directly into the hands of [ISIS/ISIL](#) who can use the western lack of action as highly effective propaganda to support their own cause. The use of military power is unlikely to achieve anything other than to allow the terrorists to gain further support from displaced people who may see co-operation with them as their only hope for survival in a world which appears prepared to abandon them and their children in their time of dire need.

Military action against [ISIS/ISIL](#) in Syria, except in a limited form to assist refugees, is likely to backfire since Bashar al-Assad's regime can claim that they have not requested help, and therefore military action is an infringement of international law, and a violation of their territorial rights. This accusation could easily be made, and could potentially be very damaging to those accused, especially to a small country like Canada whose resource-rich territory in the Arctic is

already being eyed keenly by other nations bordering it. So, Canada, take a close look and see if this is what you really want.

To shift our focus a little, it has often been said that "*One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter*". This link leads to a listing of events in various countries that have been classed as terrorist acts, but which have later been seen through the lens of history as patriotic acts, the only recourse left against those the patriots saw as their oppressors. The Americans did this when they fought against the British in the late 1700s, and those men are now revered as important figures who helped build America.

Therefore, before we make any decisions about ISIS/ISIL, we should examine very seriously what they imply, and also ask ourselves what we would do if we were in their place. This is in no way to exonerate those [ISIS/ISIL](#) members who have committed heinous acts against innocent women and children; however we must examine carefully our motives for opposing them, and also the means we use to do that. Bombing them off the face of the earth makes us no better than they are, and is likely to return to haunt us, particularly if innocent civilians are caught in the action and described as "collateral damage", a term which is easily misused. If we believe in law and order, then we must allow the law to run its course, between nations and races as between individuals. This may sometimes involve providing tacit support in that country, such as training their military; or it may mean more direct action like entering a country without invitation or permission to perform policing action. And while it is always desirable to have the approval of the country in question, there may be times when direct intervention is required without that approval, as when innocent civilians are being slaughtered. In any case, it must be done with great caution. One fact is certain: in very few cases has this kind of intervention succeeded, and as often as not it has created more problems.

These issues need to be debated freely and openly by Canadians before any decision is made regarding the use of military force in any other country. It is not enough to say, like a flock of sheep, that "*our allies are doing this, so we must do the same*". There must be a stringent examination of the various actions that could be taken, not a pseudoheroic knee-jerk decision that may be for many wrong reasons and which, in the final analysis, may make things worse than before. There are much to be learned from mistakes already made in the Middle East and elsewhere.

The decision to war or not to war in the Middle East is fraught with risk at every turn. It is a polyglot region at the junction of three continents and human migration routes, and empires have risen and fallen there since time immemorial. Sabre-rattling will achieve nothing, and will only add to the problems. Nations who hate and mistrust each other in ways that would make Hitler and Churchill cringe must come together, and while this has been tried and has failed, it has not been encouraged enough. Refusing to attend a meeting, or walking out on one, will help nothing; sometimes it is necessary to swallow a little pride, or even, heaven forbid, to admit that maybe you were wrong: such measures as these may be needed to prevent a conflagration or a nuclear war. We do not want to precipitate the final Armageddon, even though it may eventually prove inevitable.

The Middle East is politically explosive, and if the wrong decisions are made now, those mistakes will haunt the world for generations to come.

SLH

Please feel free to comment on this or any other editorial material in this publication. Comments will be published in the next BMD.

SHORTCOMINGS OF BILL C-51 ANTI-TERRORIST LEGISLATION

AMID THE BLUSTER AND NAME-CALLING that takes place in the Canadian House of Commons, there is often one lone voice to be heard amid the jeers and heckling. For a long time that voice was completely alone until a by-election saw the addition of a second MP elected for that party. The one lone voice was that of Elizabeth May, MP for Saanich-Gulf Islands, BC, and leader of the Green Party of Canada, now supported by Bruce Hyer, the only other Green Party MP, representing Thunder Bay-Superior North, Ontario.

On 2015 March 30, Monday, Ms May and her colleague MP Bruce Hyer presented their [60 amendments to Bill C-51](#), the Conservative Government's much criticised anti-terrorism bill. If you want to read the [entire Bill C-51](#), all 64 pages of it, it is available in English and French at the previous Link. This Bill is the Tory answer to what the Government sees as the danger of increased threats of terrorism within Canada. However in the opinions of many legislative authorities and Opposition politicians, the Bill is heavy-handed and excessive in what it proposes, and many of its measures will either be ineffective or are already adequately addressed in existing legislation. In general terms the Bill's critics identify its problems as resulting from over-hasty preparation, lack of consultation with other parties in the House, and 'knee-jerk' responses to recent events which may not even meet the criteria of *terrorism*. *** note

If you are not sure about your own opinions on these matters, read [Backgrounder: Green Party Amendments to C-51](#). Contrary to many such documents, the text of this one is only 3 pages long, is easy to read and understand, and it states the perceived problems in C-51 very clearly. Among others, the *Backgrounder* identifies a number of flaws as follows:

1. the use of wide-open phrases such as "any person" and "for any purpose". These remove most limits;
2. general *weakening of the safeguards against seizure of personal devices and documents*;
3. arrest of individuals on mere "*suspicion that they may commit a terrorist act*";
4. no explicit restriction on the *use of information obtained through torture*; and
5. *no obligation to disclose to the judge the source or means of obtaining this information*.

It is worth reading the entire document as it presents more detail and clarification of the points raised. Hopefully the Government will heed these criticisms, although it seems rather unlikely, given their past performance. However if the Bill is passed without further modification it seems likely that the courts could find themselves inundated with a plethora of challenges based on the [Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms](#).

Prior to the Green Party's publishing their amendments to Bill C-51, the Government had seemed to be singularly determined to change very little of what was already in it. According to a CBC report by Kady O'Malley, [Analysis: Bill C-51 amendments seem unconnected to committee process](#), a number of witnesses who might be considered highly relevant to the topic, such as the Federal Privacy Commissioner, were not included. Ms O'Malley identifies an even more deeply-concerning section of the Bill "that would allow CSIS agents to seek judicial authority to breach the Charter of Rights and Freedoms", provided they are authorised to do so by a warrant issued under section 21.1. It seems that a mere application to a judge could

produce such a warrant and very few conditions need be attached.

(3) *The Service shall not take measures to reduce a threat to the security of Canada if those measures will contravene a right or freedom guaranteed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms or will be contrary to other Canadian law, unless the Service is authorized to take them by a warrant issued under section 21.1.*

As Ms O'Malley has so correctly pointed out, the licence, if issued without conditions, is for a maximum of 120 days, which for all practical purposes is almost as good as being open-ended. Surely this is a dangerous situation in any framing of law, and particularly in cases such as these where so much appears to depend on the discretion of one CSIS operative and one judge.

It is disappointing that the Opposition parties, NDP, Liberals, and Greens, cannot discipline themselves sufficiently to form an effective coalition in situations like this, because it does look rather as if the Harper gang will simply bulldoze their legislation through the House of Commons and into the Senate as they have done with so many other bills. Yes, they will allow a few modifications if enough individuals make themselves heard, but there will be no thorough reworking of C-51 which is what is needed to turn it into an effective and useful piece of legislation with the numerous safeguards required around so sensitive an issue. SLH

*** note For example, the attack on Parliament Hill, was a nefarious deed committed by an unstable individual, but does that make it truly an act of terrorism?

Please feel free to comment on this or any other editorial material in this publication. Comments will be published in the next BMD.

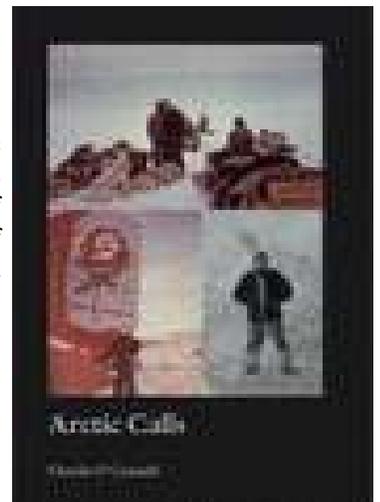
ARCTIC CALLS

by
Dr Charlie O'Connell

The retired doctor, a nostalgic exile from the Bay of Islands, is pleased to announce his book of memoirs devoted to his years of service in the Canadian North during WW2.

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is published by
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The BLOW•ME•DOWNER

is happy to support Dr Charlie's recent work.
We wish him every success with his publication.

BOOK REVIEW

Title: So, Anyway . . .

Author: Cleese, John

Publisher: Doubleday, Canada, 2014, hardcover, illustrations, 375pp

IF YOU WANT A BOOK THAT WILL MAKE YOU LAUGH from the first page to the last, this is the one. John Cleese is indubitably one of the greatest comic writers of the age of television in Britain, and his work has been enjoyed around the world. Consider, for example, the Monty Python show, or the famous “Dead Parrot” sketch, or even an episode of *Fawlty Towers*: all are vintage Cleese material; and there are many, many others.

The book, while obviously owing its origins to the author of the televised sketches, has an independent existence. It is certainly never a rehash of the comedy material. More accurately it can be described as the result of the author’s attempt to explain how he came to be the person he is. Such a project is difficult for anyone, but for someone as complex yet successful as John Cleese, it is nigh on impossible. To achieve this, he relates a number of anecdotes involving people who influenced his early years, including his parents and teachers. Both parents, but his mother in particular, exhibit some unusual, quirky, sometimes even paranoid characteristics, which could, one begins to believe, result in a set of genes like his own. It is not hard to understand how the mind that created the dead parrot sketch could owe part of its origin to the lady described in this incident:

Although there was little real emotional communication between us, my mother and I had our moments of closeness, almost all of them when we laughed together. She had quite a sharp sense of humour — and as I got older I discovered to my surprise that she also laughed at jokes that were rather dark, if not quite black. I remember on one occasion listening to her as she methodically itemised all the reasons why she didn’t want to go on living, while I experienced my usual sense of glum failure at my powerlessness to help. Then I heard myself say, “Mother, I have an idea.”

“Oh, what’s that?”

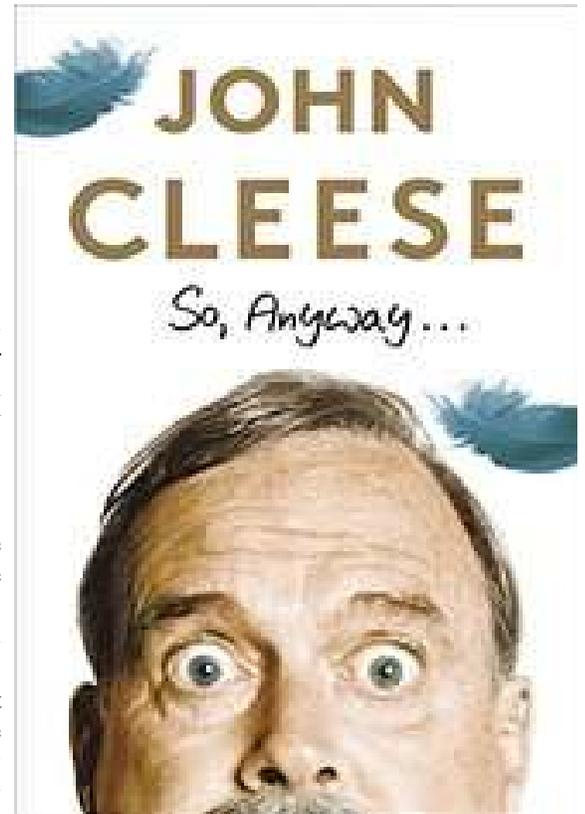
“I know a little man who lives in Fulham, and if you’re still feeling this way next week, I could have a word with him if you like — but only if you like — and he can come down to Weston and kill you.”

Silence.

“Oh God, I’ve gone too far,” I thought. And then she cackled with laughter. I don’t think I ever loved her as much as I did at that moment.”

(Pages 12-13)

As you might expect, school was an experience that lacked joy for the young John Cleese who, at the end of his own educational career, looked as if he would become one more of the many law graduates who willy-nilly stumbled into the refuge of the law



profession. However at the last moment, just before he began what threatened to be a tedious career in law, he was invited for a drink by two men in suits who asked if he would like to be a trainee producer with the BBC at thirty pounds a week, a fine starting salary. Without hesitation he accepted, and thus began a career in broadcasting that, with a few other lucky breaks, made him into a leading British television comedy writer and performer.

The book is a modest, fascinating, and somewhat tongue-in-cheek account of a young man who almost by accident finds himself embarking on a career that he hoped for, but never imagined would be his. It has to be one of the most entertaining theatrical memoirs of recent years, if not of all time, and it is definitely a heart-warming tale of the ugly duckling who, by his own reckoning was no good at anything except cricket, yet succeeded in achieving fame and respect in a television career that can both make and break an individual in record time.

On only our second night, while I was waiting to start a sketch, in the few seconds before the spotlights were turned on me, when I would therefore still see the whole, huge, packed arena stretching in front of me . . . I found myself thinking, “How is it possible that I’m not feeling the slightest bit excited?”

Perhaps I should stick to writing from now on.

(Page 375)

ASK FOR THIS BOOK IN YOUR LIBRARY

This issue of the BMD has NINE pages. Page 10 is blank.

