

LARK HARBOUR

THE

YORK HARBOUR

BLOW·ME·DOWNER

OF THE OUTER BAY OF ISLANDS, NEWFOUNDLAND

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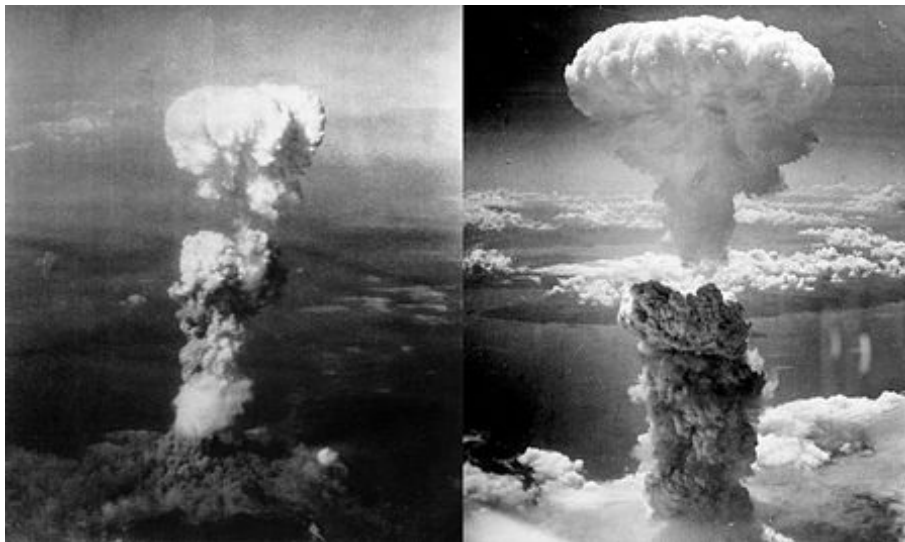
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NUCLEAR WAR HAS BECOME THINKABLE AGAIN

WE NEED A REMINDER OF WHAT IT MEANS



**As Trump faces down North Korea, it's alarming to think that
most of the world's nuclear warheads
are now in the hands of men who are prepared to use them.**

The above words are the headlines of an article dated 2017 April 17th by [Paul Mason](#), a 57-year-old British journalist. I invite you to read the [entire article](#). It is not very long, but it is very alarming, though not nearly as alarming as what the future may hold for us.

Click on [this LINK](#) or on the linked title at the top of this page.

Click [HERE](#) to see estimated statistics of the 1945 Atomic Bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan.

I say no more - Mr Mason has said it all.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

LH=Lark Harbour YH=York Harbour JB=John's Beach
 HC=Holy Communion MP=Morning Prayer EP=Evening Prayer
 P&P=Prayer & Praise HB=Baptism MHS=Mem Hymn Sing
 ● = Full Moon

2017 MAY 2017

7th Sun Easter 4, LH, 7:00pm, Holy Communion
 10th Wed ● Full Moon, *Order Mother's Day Suppers by today*
 13th Sat 4:30pm, Church Hall, **Mother's Day Supper**
 14th Sun Easter 5, **Mothers' Day**, LH, 11:00am, HC
 15th Mon SPRING CLEANUP (One day only)
 21st Sun Easter 6, LH, 11:00am, Morning Prayer
 22nd Mon Victoria Day
 28th Sun LH, 11:00am, Holy Communion

2017 JUNE 2017

4th Sun Pentecost, LH, 7:00pm, Holy Communion
 9th Fri ● Full Moon
 11th Sun Trinity Sunday, LH, 11:00am, Morning Prayer
 18th Sun Pentecost 2, **Fathers' Day**, LH, 11:00am, HC
 21st Mon Summer Solstice
 25th Sun Pentecost 3, LH, 7:00pm, Holy Communion

2017 JULY 2017

1st Sat **CANADA DAY**
 9th Sun ● Full Moon
 16th Sun JB, 2:00pm, Flower Service in Cemetery
 23rd Sun LH, 2:00pm, Flower Service in Cemetery

2017 ADVANCE DATES 2017

Aug 6th Sun LH, 11:00am
 7th Mon ● Full Moon
 13th Sun LH, 7:00pm
 20th Sun LH, 11:00am
 27th Sun LH, 11:00am
 Sep 3rd Sun LH, 7:00pm
 4th Mon Labour Day
 6th Wed ● Full Moon
 10th Sun LH, 11:00am
 17th Sun LH, 11:00am
 22nd Fri Autumn Equinox
 24th Sun LH, 11:00am
 Oct 1st Sun LH, 7:00pm
 5th Thur ● Full Moon (**Harvest Moon**)
 8th Sun Thanksgiving, 11:00am
 9th Mon Thanksgiving Holiday, Canada
 15th Sun LH, 11:00am
 22nd Sun LH, 11:00am
 24th Tues United Nations Day
 29th Sun CLUSTER SERVICE
 Nov 3rd Sun LH, 7:00pm; Then 10th, 17th, 24th, all 11:00am
 4th Sat ● Full Moon
 11th Sat Remembrance Day
 Dec 3rd Sun ● Full Moon
 21st Thur Winter Solstice
 25th Mon **Christmas Day**

BUSINESS & ORGANISATION DIRECTORY

- **Byrne's Store, Main Street, York Harbour**
groceries, hardware, gas & diesel, souvenirs 681-2040
 ~~~~~
  - **Captain Cook B&B & Cottages, York Harbour**  
 Email: [info@captaincookbb.ca](mailto:info@captaincookbb.ca) 681-2906; 1-877-681-2906  
 ~~~~~
 - **Creative Photography by Linda, 131 Main St, Lark Hr**
 Email: creativephotographyraphylinda9@gmail.com
 131 Main St, Lark Harbour 709 681-2255
 ~~~~~
  - **Curling ONE Stop Service Station, Corner Brook**  
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 ~~~~~
 - **Drop In Lounge, 23 Main Street, Lark Harbour**
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  - **Eddie Joyce, MHA, Bay of Islands, Corner Brook**  
*Member, House of Assembly, St John's. NL* 634-7883  
 ~~~~~
 - **Gudie Hutchings, MP, Long Range Mountains, NL**
Member of Parliament, Canada. 709 637-4540
 ~~~~~
  - **Sheppard's Clover Farm Store, Lark Harbour**  
*groceries, hardware, gas, Sears agency, marine* 681-2160  
 ~~~~~
 - **The Roost, Gift Shop and Gallery, York Harbour**
sea glass, paintings, handmade glass beads 681-2341
 ~~~~~
- ● ● Please support our local enterprises ● ● ●

Visit our [Webpage](#) to review eleven years of past issues of

## The BLOW•ME•DOWNER

Items of local, national & world interest, editorial opinion, obituaries, historical information, photographs, and even some previously unpublished fiction at [www.blowmedowner.webs.com](http://www.blowmedowner.webs.com)

*Remember, it's true, like The BMD,  
 The best things in life are always free!*

### WHY SO MUCH ABOUT POLITICS IN THE BMD?

International events are often confusing at best and impossible to understand at worst, but they affect our lives. I spend a lot of time reading reports from reputable newspapers and other Internet resources, trying to understand them, and then writing about them, a process which I find disciplines me to organise my thoughts and is helpful to me.

The BMD contains many of my 'reports' and I hope they may be useful to people who have less time available, but still have a desire to understand. I make no claim that my interpretations are correct, although I try to be accurate and to separate the wheat from the chaff.

If my writing is useful to anyone, I am happy. If not, ignore it!

## FUNDING RESTORED TO PUBLIC LIBRARIES IN SASKATCHEWAN

In a move similar to that of the Government of Newfoundland & Labrador, on 2017 March 22<sup>nd</sup> Premier Brad Wall's Government of Saskatchewan cut the budget of Public Libraries in the 2017-2018 financial year by \$4.8 million. This meant that certain libraries would be closed or their hours of operation severely reduced. The actual funding for Libraries in Saskatchewan before the cuts could not be ascertained with certainty, but it seems likely to have been in the region of 8 or 9 million dollars.

Public Libraries everywhere have always existed on minimal budgets, so that any cuts usually mean reduction of hours or even closure of some branches, and this was feared in Saskatchewan. However, as in N&L, the cuts caused a huge uproar among Library patrons, and the public approval of the Government fell substantially. Premier Wall was quick to re-evaluate the decision, and the cuts were restored in their entirety in an announcement on Monday past, April 24<sup>th</sup>, only a month after the initial announcement.

This was a much quicker response than that of the Ball Government here, and probably cost Brad Wall less popularity than was Premier Dwight Ball. It will soon be a year since our Blow-Me-Down Library was threatened with closure along with dozens of other small Libraries. After public action the Government of N&L put a hold on any reductions pending an inquiry. That was in the fall of 2016. We are now in May of 2017 and we still have no word on our Libraries.

*If any readers wish to study the Saskatchewan libraries issue in detail, there are several sites on line. Here are just two of them.*

<http://thestarphoenix.com/news/local-news/premier-wall-asks-education-minister-morgan-to-review-the-library-funding-issue>

<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/don-morgan-saskatchewan-libraries-1.4047682>

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*If you watched the news on Saturday April 29<sup>th</sup>, you may have seen the big protest taking place around the White House in Washington, DC. People were sitting on the grass, men in shirt sleeves, women in summer dresses, with sunhats and parasols. The sun was shining and the temperature was over 90 degrees Fahrenheit, or about 43 degrees Celsius.*

*Here in Lark Harbour at the same time we were having about 49 degrees Fahrenheit, or 9 degrees Celsius.*

*Maybe we don't want it quite as hot as Washington had it, but a little more heat would not hurt us!*

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If it seems that an excessive amount of attention has been given to international matters in this issue of the BMD, it is simply because so many changes have either occurred or may occur in the remaining months of 2017. In one way or another, these changes may impinge greatly on Canada, and of course on Newfoundland & Labrador.

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## Comment

### WATER & SEWER FOR LARK HARBOUR HOW MUCH LONGER MUST WE WAIT?

It must be three years now since we were first promised a town water & sewer system and a start was made on it with the construction of a dam, a road to it, and pipes leading down to Harbour View Road. So far, however, nothing more has been done. Of course we paid for it, with government grants and funds received from other sources. Since then we have been funding maintenance on these installations because if we don't some of it may be unusable by the time the rest of the system is finished, whenever that may be.

In the meantime, the Federal Government is providing money for infrastructure work in every province. Yet many of us are living with inadequate water supplies and septic tanks which, believe it or not, are the reasons why we voted for a water & sewer system in the first place.

And those systems are costing us money. A septic tank must be pumped every few years at a cost of several hundred dollars, and the tank may need to be replaced after twenty or so years, at even greater cost. Also, anyone building a new home in Lark Harbour must install a water supply and sewage disposal system which meets requirements of the Department of Health, and must be approved. Both these requirements involve considerable expense. Then when the home is finally connected to the municipal systems, your private water and sewer system becomes redundant.

Could this be one reason why we have not seen many new homes built in Lark Harbour in the last few years?

The town has a dozen or so plots with maintained gravel road and electricity and telephone service ready for connection, but most of those lots are otherwise untouched. However the homes already built on those roads are rightly entitled to receive community services like garbage collection, snow clearing, street lights and road maintenance like everyone else. But the town receives no revenue from the unpurchased lots, and the rest of us are paying higher tax rates for that reason.

It is now the month of May, and construction should be ready to begin, before our short period of suitable weather is too far advanced for quality work to be done. I am sure our Town Council is working hard on this issue, by keeping it in front of the Government.

— SLH

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### KEVIN O'LEARY QUILTS FEDERAL TORY LEADERSHIP RACE 2017 April 26<sup>th</sup>

So something is going right for Canada's Federal Conservative Party. If they had wanted to commit political suicide as a party, they had the best candidate in the Kevin! We didn't need another billionaire in North American politics anyway.

It's doubtful if he is really looking for something useful he could do for Canada, but if he is, perhaps now he can go back south of the border where he is obviously happier and see if he can persuade the Donald to resign as President. A worthy project for anyone, and at least he will not be expected to do it in French!

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## Comment HOW CLOSE ARE WE TO A THIRD WORLD WAR?

We may now be closer to another major conflagration than we have been since the [Cuban missile crisis](#) of 1962, and the factors involved are not very different now from those that existed in 1962.

At that time the Russians (USSR in those days) was placing nuclear-capable missiles in Cuba. When operational those missiles would be able to deliver warheads, conventional or nuclear, anywhere in North America. The Cold War was at its height then, with relations between Cuba and America at their lowest a few years after Fidel Castro, with communist anti-American aspirations, had overthrown the pro-American [Fulgencio Batista](#) regime in Cuba. American President John F Kennedy was adamantly opposed to Castro, and made serious threats if the missile sites were allowed to remain. He also blocked shipment of further missiles from USSR to Cuba.

The DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) population about 25 million, is often known as North Korea, to distinguish it from the ROK (Republic of Korea) or South Korea, population about 50 million (See Note). The Korean Peninsula had been ruled by Japan until the end of World War Two, then by USSR and later by China. (See [Korean War](#)) By 1950 there was open conflict between the northern half of the peninsula (supported by USSR and later by China) and the southern half (supported under the United Nations by USA, Canada, and other noncommunist nations). Fighting should have ended in 1954 when a [DMZ \(demilitarised zone\)](#) was created roughly at the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel. However the two parts of Korea have never accepted the arrangement, and tension continues to exist there, with sporadic fighting. This is a concern for the ROK as Seoul (pop 11 million) is only 25km south of the border, an easy target for the DPRK.

In recent years the DPRK has developed a very impressive military establishment, with more than a million highly trained members in a total population of about 25 million. DPRK also has mandatory training for young people. (Compare with [USA, about 2 million](#) and [Canada about 100,000.](#)) The government has also spent vast funds on purchasing and developing armaments. One area of development has been missiles and in the last year or two a nuclear capability. It is questionable whether the DPRK is presently capable of delivering a nuclear payload as far as North America from a land base, but they may have such capability launching from submarines.

Relationships between America and DPRK have always been poor, but recently, with the election of Donald Trump, they are even worse. Trump's recent attacks on Syria — the bombing of Al-Shayrat airfield on April 6<sup>th</sup>, followed a week later by the April 13<sup>th</sup> [MOAB bomb attack on ISIS](#) at [Nangahar](#), Afghanistan — have been met, not unexpectedly, by Kim Jong-un's bold threats of retaliation and an impressive military display in case Trump would attempt any such tactics against DPRK. Meanwhile an American battle fleet of an aircraft carrier and several other naval vessels have taken up stations in the China Sea off the west coast of the Korean Peninsula.



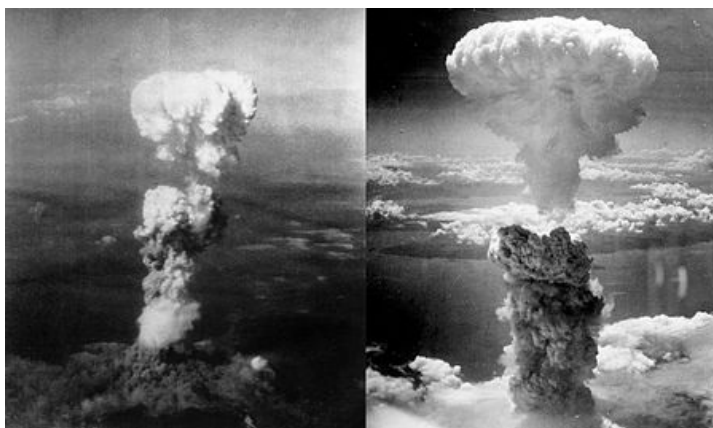
It is not clear if Trump intended his two attacks on the ISIS installations to be any kind of warning to the DPRK, but Kim Jong-un appears to have interpreted it as such, giving his own warning in return. Trump however took his opportunity during his meeting with the Chinese Premier to ask for China's help on reining in the DPRK. This may be useful since China has some similar concerns, as do South Korea, Japan and others in that highly populated region. China has since cooperated as a member of the UN Security Council by abstaining from the vote on the [ban on the DPRK's exports](#), thus reducing its revenue in hope of slowing its armaments progress. China is however placed in a difficult position as they are the DPRK's only ally. It remains to be seen how effective these sanctions can be, or even how long they will remain in place.

There are very few options available for remedying poor relations between nations. History testifies to the fact that so many international difficulties culminate in warfare as in the two World Wars. The only way to avoid this is for the nations involved to avoid threats while continuing to communicate. Leaders should be ready to lose a little 'face' without assuming that they are being 'weak': restraint is a product of strength, not of weakness. Currently we are witnessing sabre-rattling by both USA and DPRK, distorted by an arms race by the DPRK. Both leaders are volatile; both are afraid to lose faith; both appear to be more concerned with the opinions of their citizens rather than determining in what ways their opponents might be prepared to cooperate. With ISIS this approach would not work. But it could be worth trying with Kim Jong-un whose main objective appears to be the security of his own territory.

Until all such approaches have been defined, tried, and proved unworkable, they must not be abandoned. As it happens Kim Dong-un seems to be more concerned for DPRK's security than for territorial ambitions, and this may be the key. Hitler's intentions were already clear by the time [Neville Chamberlain](#) brought home his famous "[peace for our time](#)" document signed in 1938. Until similar peace moves and other potential approaches have been tried and found to lead nowhere, they must not be written off. The alternatives are far too horrifying. If you do not agree, [ask the Japanese](#).

NOTE 1 - While not always true, it is ironic that many countries using the words "democratic" or a reference to "people" in their official names are less democratic and more totalitarian, while the more genuinely democratic nations do not feel compelled to emphasise the fact.

Check this [article from the Courier Mail newspaper of Brisbane, Australia](#), detailing a further risk associated with North Korea's testing of nuclear explosions.





## THE FLY ON THE WALL



*Conversation overheard between the  
President and Pedro  
in a washroom at the White House*

President Good Morning, my friend. Have we met before?  
What's your name, my friend?

Pedro Me Pedro, boss.

President How long have you been working at the White House,  
Pedro?

Pedro Pedro work here for President Barack Obama since one  
year, boss.

President Hmmm. Where you from Pedro?

Pedro Aaah . . . Texas . . . boss.

President Hmmm. Texas, huh? How long were you living in  
Texas, Pedro?

Pedro Few year, boss.

President How many years, Pedro?

Pedro Oooh . . . two . . . maybe three year, boss.

President *(Aside)* Hmmm . . . *(To Pedro)* Where did you live  
before that, Pedro?

Pedro *(Hesitantly and very quietly)* Mexico, boss.

President So you're Mexican? I thought so.

Pedro *(Still quietly)* Si, señor, Mexicano.

LONG PAUSE

President You ever hear talk of my great wall, Pedro?

Pedro Wall, boss? Oooh, no, boss, never hear of great wall.  
Only Great Wall of China. That Wall, Boss?

President Good grief no! . . . I mean MY wall that I am going to  
build. Between Texas and Mexico, Pedro. It will be  
fantastic, really fantastic! We are starting to build it  
soon, Pedro. The Great Wall of Trump will make the  
Great Wall of China look like a backyard fence!  
Believe me!

Pedro Why you want build Wall, boss?

President To keep Mexicans out.

Pedro Mexicans okay people, boss. Why you want keep  
Mexicans out?

President To make USA great again. USA! USA! USA!

Pedro Mexicans help make USA great. USA not great now,  
boss?

President Not great enough, Pedro. My Wall will make America  
great again. It will last for thousands of years. Believe  
me! God bless America!

Pedro Maybe Pedro get job building Wall, boss? Better job  
for Pedro than cleaning washrooms. Right, boss?

President No Pedro. That's the point. Mexicans come here and  
take jobs from Americans. Like you did, Pedro. But  
my Wall will keep Mexicans out. And Mexico will pay  
for it! Billions of dollars! Incredible!

Pedro Pedro no take job from American, boss. American no  
want Pedro's job. No future this job, boss.

President Of course there is, Pedro, believe me. America will  
always need janitors and people to do those dirty low

wage jobs, but Americans will do them too. Believe  
me, Pedro, believe me.

Pedro No, boss. Americans not want these job. Man told me  
so. He say not nice job for American.

President What man, Pedro? Who told you that?

Pedro Man that work in office and send me to work here.

President The man who gave you this job, Pedro?

Pedro Yes, boss, guess so.

President He's a failure, Pedro, believe me. He should never  
have told you that. It's not true, Pedro.

Pedro He said it very true, boss.

President No, Pedro, it's not true. You must not believe it.

Pedro *(Pause)* So you mean he *lie* to me, boss?

President W-e-e-e-l-l . . . No, Pedro, not exactly. Some people  
might call it a lie. But maybe he believes it, so it's like  
. . . an *alternative fact*. Understand, Pedro?

Pedro No, boss, Pedro no understand.

President Then don't you worry about that, Pedro. It's a  
Washington thing anyway. You only need to know  
things like that if you want to be President, like me.  
But you can never be President, because you were not  
born in this country. Go back to Mexico, Pedro, and  
be President there.

Pedro Ooooh, boss! Noooo! Pedro want be President here,  
in Yoonited States. Pedro learn many *alternative facts*  
and be President here in America, just like you, boss.

President No, Pedro, you will never be President here. You  
have to be born in America to be President.

Pedro But Barack Obama not born here, boss. You said he  
not born in America.

President Another *alternative fact*, Pedro. But for heaven's  
sake, Pedro, if the New York Times, or the  
Washington Post, or CNN, or any of those fake news  
reporter dudes come after you, don't tell them we had  
this chat. I really ought to have you deported, Pedro,  
but I like you, so I won't.

Pedro *(Grinning)* Right on, boss! Pedro understand  
*alternative facts* good now, boss. Pedro never tell  
nobody, boss! Not Señor Barack Obama! Not Señor  
Putin! Not even Crooked Hillary!

THE FLY



ON THE WALL

If you want to compare President Trump's campaign promises against  
his performance in his first 100 days, these websites will help you.

1. [Trump's Contract with the American Voters - PDF document](#)  
This is Trump's own 10 point list which he presented to voters  
during the election campaign.
2. [A scorecard of his success and failure](#)  
This is a scorecard based on the 10 points of the Contract.

## TRUMP THREATENS CANADA'S SOFTWOOD LUMBER EXPORTS

Last week President Donald Trump announced that Canada's softwood exports to the USA were unfair. It's the same old argument that came up [several times](#) in recent decades, and it was settled every time in Canada's favour.

The argument centres around "[dumping](#)", which is roughly defined as *selling a product at a price that is lower than the price it normally charges in its own home market, or sells at a price that does not meet its full cost of production*. The Americans claim that most Canadian lumber is harvested from Crown Land, either federal or provincial, where the stumpage fees are set by government and are lower than if they were set in a competitive market as they are in the USA. This, claim the Americans, amounts to 'dumping' and is in effect an unfair subsidy which works against their own industry, and becomes subject to a countervailing tariff which increases the cost to the consumer. That tariff was charged, about \$5bn, to Canadian exporters by the US government until the disagreement was resolved, when it was returned, minus about \$1bn in legal fees.

One of the problems is that it is not easy to arrive at a figure to represent a fair countervailing tariff. For Canada to increase the stumpage might look like a simple solution, but it would also increase the cost to Canadian consumers and may harm Canadian business. This is one of the disadvantages of being a small country exporting to a much larger one: Canada exports a larger proportion of our total [Gross National Product](#) and it is therefore more important to our economy as a whole. To the US, it is a small proportion in a relatively small industry in roughly a ten times larger GNP, although it is one that can have great political importance for a President like Trump.

In the latest form of the agreement ([Lumber IV](#)) in 2002, 15,000 Canadian lumber workers were laid off. This illustrates the importance of the export industry to Canada's economy. Since N&L does not export any significant amount of softwood lumber (except as paper) it has little direct effect on our provincial economy, but the indirect effect is damaging to us, just as it is to the rest of Canada.

It's impossible to assess the likely outcome of these talks if or when they begin, because Trump's remarks change so much from day to day. Also there is a chance yet that NAFTA may be completely cancelled: he has the power to do that with impunity, but we do not. In the meantime we would do well to explore alternative export opportunities such as to China or the EU.

Our government has done as much as it can to this date. So we must await Trump's next move, which may not be immediate. One thing is pretty certain — we are not likely to see generosity to a small close neighbour. The mouse must always be wary of the elephant.

— SLH

For further information on the topic:

[Importance of lumber to Canada's economy](#)  
[Canada–United States softwood lumber dispute](#)  
[General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade](#)  
[Dumping \(pricing policy\)](#)

## JOSÉ AT THE BALL GAME

José grew up in Mexico and when he finished growing he never made it past five feet tall. When he was full grown he was still much shorter than most young men his age. At age 20 he decided to go to the USA to try his luck at earning a better living. So he said goodbye to his family in Mexico and set out to the USA.



José had always loved baseball, and he told his mother that when he could buy a ticket, he would go to watch a game of the Texas Rangers in Dallas.

The game was very exciting for José, and as soon as the game finished he called Mama to tell her about it.

"How was the game, then José?" Mama asked him.

"It was very, very good, Mama. And the Americans are such nice polite people, too," he said. "They were so glad to see me there."

"Oh I am so happy you enjoyed it, José. But how do you know the Americans are so polite?" asked Mama.

"Oh, Mama, they really are!" he said. "Before the game started I knew I wouldn't be able to see it very well, because all the Americans around me were so big and much taller than me, Mama," he told his mother.

"So how did you see the game, then?" asked Mama.

"There was this tall pole with a big American flag at the top, so I ran over there before the game began and I climbed to the top of the pole," said José. "And when the people saw me up there, they all turned and



looked up at me, all the players, and the cheerleaders. And a lady in a pretty dress came out and saw me and started singing!"

"Really? What did she sing, José?" asked Mama.

"I so surprised I nearly fell off the pole," said José. "But the people all went quiet, looking straight up at me, with their hands on their hearts. And when the lady finished singing, the people were so happy for me that they all cheered and clapped for me."

"But what did the lady sing, José? Tell me, my son!"

"I couldn't understand all of it, Mama, but the first words were, José, can you see?"

If you are not familiar with the [Star-Spangled Banner](#), the USA National Anthem, click [here](#) for a performance by Mariah Carey. It is rarely sung by nonprofessional singers because of its level of difficulty, extending over slightly more than an octave and a half, near the end. Note how Mariah Carey does it!

The lyrics were written in 1814 during the [War of 1812](#) by [Francis Scott Key](#) (1779-1843) and are totally American. These are the first two lines:

"O say can you see, by the dawn's early light,

What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming,"

But most Americans may not be aware that the music of the anthem was composed by a British man, [John Stafford Smith](#) (1750-1836).



## ELECTIONS IN EUROPE

While we are still hearing rumblings and flashes after the American Presidential election of last year, we must also take note of similar events in France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands.

**France** is already into an election to choose a new President, the UK to elect a government on June 8, and Germany a government later this year. All have parties on the extreme right, and the international climate may be just what they need to win. However the French far-right [National Front](#) party of [Marine Le Pen](#) came second in last weekend's first-round election, with [Emmanuel Macron](#)'s uninspired centrist [En Marche!](#) party as the winner. (The French electoral system has two stages: First, a vote involving all parties — and there are several, ranging through the entire political spectrum — then Second, a run-off vote two weeks later to decide between the two leaders in the first vote.) And it looks as if several of the moderate leaders now out of the race are putting their support behind Macron's [En Marche!](#) party to block the NF.

The general consensus seems to be that En Marche! will win, but we have seen evidence of how wrong the political pundits and even opinion polls can be in these days of changed mood. The French, however, do seem to be aware of the risks if they elect Marine Le Pen on Sunday May 7. Hopefully France will maintain its commonsense attitude and stay clear of any extremists.

The **United Kingdom** has Conservative, Labour, Liberal Democratic, and Scottish National Party, plus a raft of small parties who elected only 15 in total in the 2015 election. As things now stand, polls indicate a large Conservative majority suggesting that Britain will continue to remove itself from the European Union after the June 8 vote.

**Germany, Italy and the Netherlands** also have elections scheduled for later in the year, but it is early days for them, and no doubt their elections will be influenced by results in earlier elections of other EU member countries. Angela Merkel of Germany has become the *de facto* leader of the EU and also appears to have the greatest popularity as Chancellor of Germany going into the September election, but it is rather early yet for polls to be very useful. Many European countries have several parties who have to be drawn into a coalition in order to govern, making forecasting of the final outcome very difficult before the event.

The one certainty is that by the start of 2018, the political environment in Europe could be very different from today.

— SLH