

BLOW·ME·DOWNER

ABOUT THE OUTER BAY OF ISLANDS, NEWFOUNDLAND

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NEWFOUNDLAND & LABRADOR

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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 FEBRUARY 2017

5th Sun Epiphany 5, LH, 7:00pm
 10th Fri ● Full Moon
 12th Sun Epiphany 6, LH, 11:00am
 14th Tues LH ACW Annual Meeting
 19th Sun Epiphany 7, LH, 11:00am
 26th Sun Transfiguration of our Lord, LH, 11:00am

2017 MARCH 2017

1st Wed Ash Wednesday - LH, Service 3:30pm
 5th Sun Lent 1, LH, 7:00pm
 8th Wed LH, Midweek Lenten Service, 7:00pm
 11th Sat *Clocks forward 1 hour for Daylight Saving Time*
 12th Sun Lent 2, LH, 11:00am
 ● Full Moon
 15th Wed JB, Midweek Lenten Service, 7:00pm
 19th Sun Lent 3, LH, 11:00am
 20th Mon Spring Equinox
 22nd Wed LH, Midweek Lenten Service - 7:00pm
 26th Sun Lent 4, LH, 11:00am
 29th Wed JB, Midweek Lenten Service - 7:00pm

2017 APRIL 2017

2nd Sun TBA
 9th Sun Palm Sunday
 11th Tues ● Full Moon
 16th Sun EASTER DAY

2017 ADVANCE DATES 2017

May 10th Wed ● Full Moon
 14th Sun Mothers' Day
 22nd Mon Victoria Day
 June 9th Fri ● Full Moon
 18th Sun Fathers' Day
 21st Mon Summer Solstice

2017 ADVANCE DATES cont'd 2017

Jul 1st Sat **CANADA DAY**
 9th Sun ● Full Moon
 Aug 7th Mon ● Full Moon
 Sep 4th Mon Labour Day
 6th Wed ● Full Moon
 22nd Fri Autumn Equinox
 Oct 5th Thur ● Full Moon ([Harvest Moon](#))
 8th Sun Thanksgiving Sunday
 9th Mon Thanksgiving Holiday, Canada
 24th Tues United Nations Day
 Nov 4th Sat ● Full Moon
 Dec 3rd Sun ● Full Moon

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: creativephotographybylinda9@gmail.com
 131 Main St, Lark Harbour 709-681-2255
www.creativephotography-by-linda.com
 ~~~~~
  - **Curling ONE Stop Service Station, Corner Brook**  
*automotive repairs, servicing, fuel* 785-2619  
 ~~~~~
 - **Drop In Lounge, 23 Main Street, Lark Harbour**
entertainment, food, licenced 681-2103
 ~~~~~
  - **Eddie Joyce, MHA, Bay of Islands, Corner Brook**  
*Member, House of Assembly.* 634-7883  
 ~~~~~
 - **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 ● ● ●

SPECIAL NOTICE

WE OFFER OUR HEARTFELT CONDOLENCES TO THE FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF THE VICTIMS OF THE SUNDAY EVENING MASSACRE AT THE ISLAMIC CULTURAL CENTRE IN QUEBEC. ALL CANADIANS STAND FIRMLY WITH YOU IN THIS TRAGIC TIME FOR YOUR ENTIRE COMMUNITY.

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

*Remember that, like The BMD,
The best things in life are always free!*

WHAT IS THIS OBJECT?

CLUES - This object measures about 2¼ inches or 5.7 centimetres across and is about half an inch or 1 centimetre thick.

It has a generic relationship to something in the news.

If you think you might know what it is, or want to try a guess, email your answer with any additional explanation you feel may be needed to me at blowmedowner@gmail.com with "BMDQUIZ" in the subject line. Correct answers will be published in the next issue of the BMD after they are received.

We can't promise a prize, but if you can say what the object is, your name will be announced in a later issue of the BMD. That should be a good enough prize for anyone!

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED . . .

If you are interested to read an article that summarises the typical attitude many, if not most, Americans have about Canada, then read this article: [Canada's response to the US election is a most Canadian nod to our predicament.](#)

The author, Jean Hannah Edelstein, is an American writer who lives in New York, but she enrolled in a Montreal university, most likely McGill, and describes some of the adjustments she had to make when she arrived.

THE DOOMSDAY CLOCK

The Doomsday clock is not a real timepiece as it does not tell time — at least, not in the ordinary sense.. Its purpose is to show how close the world is to destruction, which is what 'doomsday' means. It has existed since 1947 when a group of nuclear scientists, concerned about the dangers of nuclear weapons, especially since 1945 when the first two atomic bombs were dropped on the Japanese cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki and World War Two ended.

Originally intended to make people aware of the dangers of nuclear devices, it now also includes the risk from Climate Change and more recently new developments in Life Sciences and Technology, all of which can threaten life on earth.

The Doomsday Clock hangs in the University of Chicago. It is adjusted to indicate how close we are to destruction, and was originally set at seven minutes to midnight.

The closest the Clock has come to midnight (zero hour) was 1953 in the Cold War when the USA and the USSR both conducted hydrogen bomb tests.

The furthest was in 1991 when the Cold War officially ended.

There have been numerous fluctuations in the seventy years since its inception. Donald Trump's election and inauguration as President of the USA caused the most recent move forward of 30 seconds in January to 2½ minutes before Midnight. Let's hope it goes no closer and even starts to reverse direction soon.

Follow these links for more information:

[Doomsday Clock](#)

and

[Doomsday Clock: Humanity might be edging closer to its end](#)

Read the full text of Trump's inaugural speech [HERE](#).

If it seems to you that there is an excess of information and discussion of Donald Trump in this issue of the BMD, I offer no apology. I consider Trump to be the greatest current threat to democracy and freedom, and it is important to draw everyone's attention to the facts that illustrate this threat.

Obituary
DORIS MURIEL BYRNE
 1943 - 2016 December 31
 Late of YORK HARBOUR, NL



IT WAS WITH GREAT SADNESS that the family of the late Doris Muriel Byrne announced her passing at the Palliative Care Unit, Sir Thomas Roddick Hospital, Stephenville, on Saturday, December 31st, 2016, at the age of 73 years.

She left in sorrow with fond and loving memories her children Clinton (Karen) Byrne, Laura (Ameir) Byrne, Pamela (Andre) Rossignol, Robert (Greg) Byrne and Mark (Millie) Byrne; her grandchildren Robyn (Michael) Bissonnette, Megan (Corey) Canniff, Kimberly (Derek) Pelley, Adrian (Julia) Byrne, Jordan (Charlie) Rossignol, Mark Strickland, Melissa Byrne, Brooke Rossignol, Jesse Byrne and Jacob Byrne; her dearly loved great-grandchildren Taylor, Zachary, Evan, Toby, Michael, Abigail, Ella, Autumn, and Dylan; her siblings: Sybil LeMaire, Lottie (Norman) Childs, Phyllis (Eugene) Coporon, Hilda (Albert) Wheeler, Joan (Gord) Youden, Ronda (Terry) Bartlett, Bern Sheppard and Greg (Debbie) Sheppard; her in-laws: Masie Kendell, Thomas Byrne, David Byrne, Annie (Doug) Duffney, Hazel (Ron) Weibe, Lynn (Harland) Cross, Leo (Marie) Byrne, Kathleen (Eric) Sheppard, Benjamin (Cathy) Byrne, Gord (Colleen) Byrne, and Dorothy Byrne; and a large circle of extended family and friends.

Doris was predeceased by her husband Ivan; her parents: Everett and Eva Sheppard; in-laws Mark and Margaret Byrne; sons Jeffrey and Clement Byrne; sister: Ena Murrin; brothers: Melvin Sheppard and Harvey Sheppard; brothers-in-law: Clyde Murrin, Frank LeMaire, Gordon Kendell, Gerald Byrne, Brian Byrne and Henry Kendell; and sisters-in-law: Shirley Byrne and Elva Byrne.

The family would like to express their sincere gratitude to all the doctors and nurses at Sir Thomas Roddick Hospital and the staff of Acadian Village in Stephenville for helping care for our Mom.

Friends and family may visit St James Anglican Church in Lark Harbour on Monday 2-4 & 7-9pm. The funeral service celebrating Doris's life took place at St James Anglican Church, on Tuesday, January 3rd, 2017, at 2:00pm, with Rev David Taylor officiating. Interment followed at the Roman Catholic cemetery in York Harbour.

We offer our sincere condolences to Doris's family during this sad time of their great loss.

NEW RADIO STATION
Bay Of Islands Radio
CKVB 100.1 FM

Anything that encourages greater communication in our region should always be encouraged. BOIR is not on air yet, but it should be encouraged because it will be a service that will benefit our whole region. Since 2009 it has been broadcasting via the Internet from the Grenfell College Campus, and you may have heard it when in Corner Brook. Now it has relocated to 40 Brook Street and in February 2016 it applied to CRTC for licensing to broadcast on 100.1 MHz with 50 watts power.

According to Kody Gardner, Co-Chair/Technical Director of Bay of Islands Radio, the organisation is soliciting donations for the purchase of equipment and is enlisting volunteers to assist.

CKVB-FM should soon be heard in and around Corner Brook, but for the immediate future it may not be heard too far beyond the City limits. However this is hoped to be remedied quite soon, to provide a local radio service to benefit all communities in the Bay of Islands.

An Open House was held on January 23rd at 5:00pm. At this time of year and considering the weather we have been experiencing, that is not a very convenient time for people down the Bay to attend. But if you are interested in becoming involved, or just wish to learn more about the project, contact Kody at (709) 388-1868 or (709) 640-3237 or email him at kody@boir.ca.

STONEHENGE & HOB HURST'S HOUSE

From 3,000 BCE to TODAY



Stonehenge, Salisbury Plain, England

The famous prehistoric stone circle called [Stonehenge](#) dates from about 5,000 years ago, give or take a few. It is the most spectacular of many prehistoric stone circles to be found all over the British Isles.

I recall a winter hike we took once, back in 1964, to visit [Hob Hurst's House](#), which we had spotted as a tiny symbol on the Ordnance Survey map of the area which we always used for hiking. It was not a house, may never have been one, and no one has any idea who Hob Hurst was. It was merely a stone circle, perhaps of some ancient religious significance, situated on top of the bleak English moorland plateau above the town of [Bakewell](#), Derbyshire, not far from the stately home [Chatsworth House](#). It measured only about ten metres in diameter, much smaller than Stonehenge, with less than a dozen stones remaining. But as today's property merchants say, what counted was *location, location, location!*



The site of Hob Hurst's House as it is today in summertime.

You could feel it. There was a sense of being back in time, in millennia, even, to the neolithic age. Hob Hurst's House was some distance from any settlement, and we, just the two of us, were the only people there on this day in late fall. As far as the eye could see there were no signs of human habitation except for an ill-defined footpath that may have been a sheep track anyway since they live in a half wild state on the moors as they probably have from prehistoric times. In many ways those were ideal conditions allowing us to experience a place of this kind, which had survived so many thousands of winters. The above picture does not set the mood, as it was clearly taken during summer conditions. The site has also been developed since 1964. There were no signboards then, to dispel the solitude!

Stonehenge possesses some of that strange magic too, although it is one of England's most popular tourist sites, making it difficult to get that remote lonely feeling that Hob Hurst's House created.

No doubt Stonehenge has been threatened many times during its five millennia, but it has always survived. However, like many of the ancient constructions of Europe, it has met its most serious threats in recent years as a result of tourism development, which brings thousands of people every year as well as modern traffic congestion. Neither of those is a problem for Hob Hurst's House, even today.

Located in southern England on Salisbury Plain, Stonehenge consists of a couple of dozen dressed stone blocks. These were quarried in South Wales some 140 miles or 220 kilometres away, weigh a couple of tons each, and are a unique testament to the ingenuity of our ancestors who transported those blocks over land, rivers, and even the Bristol Channel. When we remind ourselves that the work was done by sheer physical labour, perhaps even without the use of animal power, it is an engineering achievement for its day that ranks with modern successes like the launching of the *Titanic*, or the Moon landing, or the exploration of the Solar System.

The demands of modern transportation, however, have begun to threaten the existence of Stonehenge, the worst threat being the voracious need for more roads in the area. Stonehenge is, to put it simply, in the way. There is a plan afoot to construct a tunnel under the site, to accommodate a four-lane highway for the huge traffic volume of the A303 that now passes nearby. These old structures, like the medieval cathedrals, were not designed to withstand the vibration caused by heavy trucks passing at 100 km/hr, and the vibration causes damage that is costly to repair. Such damage, along with that caused by pollution, is commonly seen in historic buildings located in areas of heavy traffic. The tunnel will hide the unsightly modern highway, but its construction may cause unforeseen disturbance to the terrain, and there may be many more such items remaining to be discovered in the vicinity of Stonehenge. Salisbury Plain has been inhabited perhaps longer than any other region of Britain, and sites for miles around have yielded numerous archeological finds. Many others may yet still be discovered.

If the findings are not accurately described, their scientific value is diminished or even lost. Such locations must be protected for future generations, but with today's rising costs, preservation and protection. In today's materialistic world, cost is the main priority.

Stonehenge is unique, as the largest and most spectacular of Neolithic monuments. We tend to think of the early residents of Northern Europe as crude and unsophisticated when compared with the Egyptians and other Middle Eastern populations, but this is a questionable notion. The age of the Stonehenge site compares closely with the Egyptian Pyramids, the earliest of which is the [Pyramid of Djoser](#), constructed around 2650 BCE. However Stonehenge began with an earthen bank and ditch constructed about 2700 BCE. Over the next 200 years to 2500 BCE wooden posts were erected, and then the stones were installed, starting about 2500 BCE. The orientation of Stonehenge with the solstices indicates a degree of sophistication.

Mesopotamia between the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers, is often referred to as 'the Cradle of Civilisation, and the story of human development there is a little different from elsewhere. At the time men were building Stonehenge, the first cities were developing and writing was being invented in Mesopotamia. Stonehenge is not a city, nor has any evidence of writing been discovered there, so Mesopotamia may have precedence there. Parts of India and China may also have claims to those innovations. But in any case, Stonehenge holds an important position in many areas of human development.

—SLH

EIGHT MEN OWN AS MUCH WEALTH AS THE POOREST HALF OF THE WORLD

“New estimates show that just eight men own the same wealth as the poorest half of the world. As growth benefits the richest, the rest of society – especially the poorest – suffers.”

So begins [a briefing paper put out in 2017](#) January by [Oxfam](#) GB, the British branch of the worldwide charity organisation of which Oxfam Canada is one of about twenty member organisations in other countries.

If the above statement is fleshed out with actual numbers, those eight men own \$426 billion (Note 1), or about \$53 billion each. This is roughly equal to the total wealth of the world’s 3.6 billion poorest people, who OWN less than \$120 worth of possessions each. ***Could you live with total property worth only \$120?***

The above statistic does NOT relate only to annual income: it includes EVERYTHING—house, clothes, as well as annual income—of those 3.6 billion people, the poorer half of the world’s population. The other wealthier 3.6 billion includes most of us in Canada, as well as all the rest of the world’s wealthier people. It includes billionaires too.

The same Oxfam report also states that [David Thomson](#) (\$37 billion) and [Galen Weston Sr](#) (\$8.9 billion) control wealth equal to that of about 11 million Canadians and are Canada’s two wealthiest men. However Thomson and Weston at their respective positions of 22nd and 147th on the Forbes list (Note 2) which has Bill Gates, owner of Microsoft (worth US\$84.2 billion as of 2017 January) as first are relatively humble. ***Does anyone need that much money?***

Many people criticise Oxfam and similar charities for spending too much money on administration, salaries and expenses. But those employees also have to live, and charities have to compete against wealthy corporations for the best individuals. There are very significant costs of transportation and travel in both fundraising and distribution efforts, and the charity employees are often subject to life-threatening dangers where there is armed conflict, or where drought, famine, disease and crime are rife. Often, too, they are the targets of terrorists who kidnap them to collect ransom, or simply to kill them in gruesome ways to gain coverage on world media. ***Would you be willing to risk your life or health in unstable, perhaps ungoverned, war-torn regions? Or to provide services in overcrowded unsanitary refugee camps?***

Despite efforts made recently, the world poverty situation is growing worse, and the solution seems more elusive than ever. It has been suggested that the election of Donald Trump as President of the USA, and also the UK Brexit vote, are both the results of growing discontent among less wealthy ordinary citizens in those two countries. However one has to be very naïve to believe that Billionaire Trump is going to do much to help, or to actually relinquish control over his wealth: his recent plan to turn it over to family members is not likely to make much difference unless some independent third party validation is imposed. And for the British, leaving the European Union will do nothing to increase wealth and may increase poverty there as well as in the EU, adding [inflation](#) to the troubles of the Pound Sterling. [Inflation](#) usually hurts the poor, while the wealthy can more easily

absorb the price increases resulting from inflation.

Unless anyone can devise a more effective plan to bring this grotesquely unbalanced distribution of wealth under control, the only solution may be found in taxation and some form of redistribution of profits from all business companies in proportion to their wealth. That was one of the purposes behind [nationalisation](#) which was tried after WW2. However such ‘interference’ by government is almost anathema today, particularly in North America, and has been difficult to apply anywhere: most people simply do not wish to surrender any more of their hard-won earnings, and will not support government action as it demands even more of their personal income. Such policies can also be difficult to frame and are often viewed as “socialist”, or even “communist”, both dirty words in North America.

Taxation is the most likely means of levelling wealth in a western democracy. But taxation is unpopular everywhere, especially in a countries where some political parties are obsessed with reducing and even abolishing taxes, particularly those that are scaled according to income. Often though there is really no alternative which is fair on everyone. Increases are sure to raise the ire of those on the political right, as we are hearing from many in the present Conservative Party of Canada leadership competition. Some Liberals and even NDPers have similar reactions to scaled personal income taxes. Flat taxes on consumption like our GST tend to be more popular, especially with the wealthier because such taxes are not based on income. Instead they penalise lower income people unless major remedial measures like rebates are applied as with the GST in Canada.

Perhaps the answer lies in a guaranteed, untaxed minimum income, again criticised by many as a ‘socialist’ concept and therefore fraught with problems as it would require unpopular increases to the higher tax rates already paid by wealthier Canadians. Our present Liberal government in Canada has increased taxes on the rich, and reduced them for the lower incomes, but there is room for more aggressive measures. An improved tax structure may prove to be the only solution to a problem that has been with us for ever and has not responded effectively enough to any of the softer measures which have been applied to date.

Despite financial problems caused by the sudden decline in oil revenues currently existing in many regions of Canada, this country still has more resources and more potential wealth than many others. It is time for indigenous peoples and other groups marginalised by lack of education, outdated skills, chronic illness, injury or any other handicap keeping them out of the mainstream of the work force, to receive the necessary help to enable them to participate fully in Canadian life. We must find effective ways to raise such individuals and families to greater participation in the prosperity enjoyed by the majority of Canadians. And if it means a slight reduction of the expectations of the majority by increasing their taxes, then so be it.

1. Compare this with the \$317 billion, the total amount of the [Canadian budget for 2016](#). Those 8 men control more money than Canada planned to spend in 2016.
2. *Re Forbes Magazine*: I was unable to access the Forbes list of the world’s billionaires. The information used in my article is therefore based on what was available to me on other websites.

Opinion

“Trumpty-Dumptyism” OR OF TRUTH, LIES, AND THE PRESIDENCY OF ALTERNATIVE FACTS

One of the relatively few amusing, but nonetheless alarming, expressions to have been given prominence in the election campaign and Presidency of Donald J Trump, is ‘*alternative facts*’. It is not a new concept by any means. In fact, it may be one of the oldest guiles invented by the human race, more familiar to most of us as ‘*lying*’.

It is a close relative of ‘*Humpty-Dumptyism*’ which owes its origin to author [Lewis Carroll](#) whose character Humpty Dumpty in *Through the Looking Glass* is challenged by Alice about his use of the word *glory*. He replies “*When I use a word it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less*”. I wonder what Lewis Carroll would have made of the election of Donald John Trump as 45th President of the USA.

The Founding Fathers who signed the famous *Declaration of Human Rights* on 1776 July 4th must be spinning in their graves, as must many other honest people who respect the importance of truth, although [John Hancock](#) himself, and maybe some of the other signatories appear to have been a bit roguish. (See the document at right whose first page is dominated by the signature of John Hancock, one of the Massachusetts signatories now commemorated for ever in the expression “Put your John Hancock on here”)

The ‘Alternative Facts’ issue began on Friday 2017 January 20th, Trump’s Inauguration Day, when the size of the crowds attending the activities in Washington were compared with those who attended the corresponding events in 2009 for Barack Obama’s Inauguration. Sean Spicer, Trump’s Press Secretary gave what was purported to be a Press Conference, but was really a calling-down of anyone, particularly members of the Press Corps, who disputed the question about the numbers of the crowd. “This was the largest audience ever *to witness* an inauguration, period”, he said, and he may be right if all the viewers on TV and Internet are included. However [aerial photographs](#) of the two events soon appeared, showing clearly that there were far fewer **actually present** for Trump’s inauguration events than for Obama’s. Also proportionately fewer of those in the Washington audience were there to support Trump.

The dispute therefore seems to be partly a matter of semantics. If the world-wide audiences watching on television or by Internet are included, as Spicer said in a later news briefing, then obviously the numbers would be greater. But the TV and Internet viewers were not all Americans, and many not even in the USA. Also, it may be questioned whether the millions who saw the inauguration on television or the Internet should actually be termed ‘witnesses’ in the legal sense. The argument may have been one of “apples and oranges”, but it remains true that Trump and his supporters have not always been totally honest when it came to “facts” quoted during the election campaign, especially when referring to Hillary Clinton. So it is not surprising if people are suspicious of any statements that seem to have even a small element of uncertainty.

The issue then took another turn on Sunday January 22nd, when Trump’s senior aide, Kellyanne Conway, introduced the notion of “alternative facts” into the mix. The [Urban Dictionary](#) defines “alternative facts” as “When truth is so unfavourable to a pathological

liar, that they must invent a whole new category of lies to describe their nakedly intentional acts of deception.” Other definitions are suggested, and some are amusing. Check the [Urban Dictionary](#) online, but be warned: some people may find its definitions offensive. Nor is it a proven linguistic authority.

Regardless of the furore surrounding the numbers actually present in Washington on Inauguration Day, Trump and his supporters must themselves accept much of the blame if their detractors do not believe everything they spread over the media during the campaign.

Accusations were made by Trump during the election campaign that “Bill Clinton was the worst abuser of women ever to sit in the Oval Office”. He further amplified his accusations saying that Hillary did not try to stop Bill’s activities, but “she made it possible for him to take advantage of even more women”. And there was a scurrilous accusation that Hillary herself was involved in running a child sex ring. These comments were unproven, and some were irrelevant because they dealt more with her husband’s behaviour than her own, but they were probably the cause of serious damage to Hillary’s campaign. No reasonable person would believe such accusations without proof, though many Trump supporters apparently did believe, or did not care. We may expect to see more of such spurious accusations based on ‘*alternative facts*’ if or when events give the appearance of conspiring against the new President.

In another press conference on Monday 23rd, when asked by a reporter if he always spoke the truth when talking with the press, Press Secretary Sean Spicer replied unequivocally that he did. He also claimed a little defensively, though with a grin on his face all the time, that he has a right to dispute facts he considers to be incorrect. Most people would accept this if the tone is respectful.

And the question of respect is at the root of this entire issue. It’s hard to assign blame to whoever began the lowering of standards during the election campaign, but in all honesty I do not recall Candidate Hillary making personal remarks, or inciting chants like “Lock Her Up” from the crowd. Of course she was critical of her opponent’s apparent lack of knowledge on some of the issues raised in the campaign, including questions about his association with Putin, his tax record, his treatment of his employees in his many business interests, and even some of his actual business deals where he has escaped, leaving behind unpaid debts. But these questions are fair game under the circumstances.

What remains to be seen is, how will these vitriolic exchanges eventually be resolved, as they will be. There are bound to be more argument and perhaps personality attacks before everything settles down and Trump begins to work on some of his new policies. He has already issued notices of withdrawal from some international organisations and negotiations such as the uncompleted [Trans-Pacific Partnership \(TPP\)](#). These actions, although expected for months now, are likely to exacerbate feelings among the affected nations of the world, especially if any negotiations are protracted.

However, let us hope, before we have slid too far down the slippery slope, that the ‘alternative facts’ movement dies a natural death, at least in the world of serious politics. Only if that happens can we seriously give even limited credence to what is presented to us as truth. This is of paramount importance in the case of “the Leader of the Free World” as many Americans like to style their President. To be genuinely acceptable in a modern democratic environment, leadership must be earned, and truth must be a major component.

— SLH

Read the full text of Trump’s inaugural speech [HERE](#).



Click for enlargement

SOMETHING PERSONAL

The Guardian, *the United Kingdom's best national daily newspaper*, offers [daily emailing of selected articles](#), free of cost, for subscribers. [Click here for more info](#)

The title of the article was [Brexit: May's threat to Europe: 'no deal for Britain is better than a bad deal'](#), written by Anushka Asthana, Heather Stewart and Jessica Elgot.

I was sufficiently moved by the content of the article that I responded under the name "ExBritInCanada". I am so proud of how Canada is weathering the xenophobic world environment, and so disappointed, even disgusted, with the UK's recent action with Brexit, that I had to express my feelings. I have copied my response below, and would be interested to receive comments from any readers of The BlowMeDowner, especially UK residents or people who spent part of their life there, as I did.

ExBritInCanada

As an expatriate Brit who left England in 1967, I have always followed events 'back home' with interest, and when the UK joined the EU I thought it was the best idea for many years. Had it happened before I got settled in Canada, I may never have left the UK.

However, I have been very much saddened with the Brexit decision, and even more disappointed to see the almost total lack of effort to turn the decision around. It was based on little information because no one seriously thought the Leave side would win anyway, and many people voted "Leave", unaware of consequences of such a vote.

If PM May expects the blustering attitude displayed in her recent speech on how she expects to negotiate an easy Brexit, she is mistaken. Her manner amounted to an insult to the EU people and its officials. The EU did not want Brexit, but the decision having been made, Ms May cannot reasonably expect much consideration for the UK, which has benefited hugely from its membership. The EU will have to adapt itself to life without Great Britain, and it is only reasonable for them to protect their own interests to the utmost.

When so many nations are closing their borders and making trade and movement more difficult, in the long run this is helping the world's terrorists, and I am sure they are laughing up their sleeves to see Britain relinquishing its progress and reverting to the austerity-governed country it was after WW2 when I was growing up.

I am glad I left to live in Canada, a country with an environment of openness and co-operation rather than a closed environment as I fear the USA is starting to do under President Donald Trump.

I am proud of Canada's support of world institutions and our welcoming attitude towards immigrants and refugees. I hope that I will see the UK change from its blinkered neanderthal approach to the rest of the world that it seems to be bent on, but I have strong doubts that it will return to the positive attitudes espoused by Queen Elizabeth II, who is, of course, also Queen of Canada.

Come on, Britons, show some good old Brit character that you can be proud of, not the simpering whining fears of the isolationists who seem to be taking over. Do it before it is too late.

Stuart L Harvey

TRUMP BANS AGENCIES FROM "PROVIDING UPDATES ON SOCIAL MEDIA OR TO REPORTERS"

This [article](#) in *The Guardian* of 2017 January 25th describes events that add more to the sinister side of the Trump Presidency. It is less than a week since Donald Trump was sworn in as President, and so far most of his work has been more destructive than constructive.

The people affected by this ban are employees of the US Department of Agriculture. It is similar to the gag orders [\(1\)](#) and [\(2\)](#) placed by Stephen Harper in 2008 on researchers in the employ of the Government of Canada, and was partly caused by the [dismantling of five out of seven fisheries libraries](#) across Canada in 2013, when many valuable historical records were sent to the dump.

It is a major cause for concern any time a government or its leader attempts to stifle comment or contact between its employees and the public. It was so when Stephen Harper did it, and it is no less so in Donald Trump's case. If the topic of the research is important relative to national security, then such restrictions may be appropriate, but that would be relatively rare.

Those elected to form our governments need to be reminded, and firmly, that they are **our servants, not** our masters, that they are there because we elected them, and that we provide their salaries and the funds they disperse and often try to claim credit for. When our politicians and civil servants begin to over-reach their position, then it is time for the people to act.

Read the full text of Trump's inaugural speech [HERE](#).

12-YEAR-OLD SELLING SMELTS DOMINATES SOCIAL MEDIA AFTER DFO CHARGES FATHER

A Fishy Tale

Last week in Newfoundland when this story became public, Charles Dickens's character in *Oliver Twist*, [Mr Bumble](#), who declared "The law is an ass"**, would have been in his element. Essentially what happened was that a 12-year-old boy, Jordan Harris of Gander Bay South, obviously a smart and ingenious lad, had found a way to make himself a few dollars by catching and selling [smelt](#), which he advertised on line for \$2 a bag.

It's illegal to catch and sell smelt without a licence, so DFO decided to take action. To give them due credit, they have not charged Jordan, only his father, Donnie Harris. But what a waste of time. But they felt it was necessary to set up a sting operation.

Jordan enjoys the outdoors, and he doesn't fish with thousands of dollars-worth of equipment. Nor is he going to become a millionaire any time soon. No, he just catches a few smelt, and sells them online for \$2 a dozen. But now, not wishing to break the law, he has stopped, because it really is illegal to sell smelt without a licence. Instead, he has found a way to continue his business legally. Now, he gives the smelt away, which is not illegal; but you must pay \$2.00 for the bag.

Since the first report of this incident, some uncertainty has been cast on Mr Donnie Harris's complete innocence. The incident is still under investigation

**'ass' = 'donkey', sometimes thought to be a stupid animal
Compare Gospel according to Matthew 21¹⁻⁷

Opinion

AN AMERICAN POLITICAL FIASCO?

Everyone is familiar with the [Statue of Liberty](#), sometimes less formally known as ‘Lady Liberty’, which stands in New York Harbour. At a height of 305feett or 93metres from pedestal base to the torch, it is one of the first landmarks seen by arrivals to the USA when they enter New York Harbour, as most of them used to arrive until air travel became more popular.

But many people are not aware that inside the base of the Statue there is a tablet with an inscription, a poem, *The New Colossus*, written by [Emma Lazarus](#). Here is the poem:

THE NEW COLOSSUS

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame
 With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
 Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
 A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
 Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
 Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
 Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
 The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame,
 "Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
 With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
 Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
 The wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
 Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me,
 I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

by Emma Lazarus, New York City, 1883

It is worthy of note that there was no plaque displaying the poem at the Statue at its 1886 dedication, and it was not added until 1903. This may be due to the fact that the Statue was donated by the French Republic in recognition of the United States having been founded on the concept of freedom, not of welcome to immigrants and refugees. But as the years passed and millions of immigrants and refugees from persecution and poverty arrived via New York, the [Statue became a symbol of welcome](#) to them.

But now, after more than a century of American history, a period now seems to have arrived when that noble concept of welcome — *Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free* — is being questioned. Indeed, before the Statue arrived from France where it was made, efforts to raise funds to construct the pedestal were not receiving much support, and it looked as if the Statue might never be assembled In New York, but perhaps in Boston instead.

The Statue of Liberty, and the inscription it contains, can claim to be one of the world’s most famous statues. More know Lady Liberty much better than [Michelangelo’s David](#), or Auguste Rodin’s [The Thinker](#), or even [Nelson’s Column](#) in London. Now, after President Trump’s executive order closing American borders to travellers from certain countries with Muslim majority population, Lady Liberty has taken on a sinister tarnish as dozens of world leaders are questioning the new government’s action.

One has to wonder if the USA will ever be trusted again on the international refugee scene after this serious loss of credibility. It is



less than two weeks since Trump’s inauguration, but he has already signed the executive order causing some hundred or so immigrants from the seven banned countries (Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen) to be detained simply on the basis of where they came from. Millions of Americans have taken to the streets and the airports to demonstrate solidarity with the affected individuals, as have many in other countries around the world. It has also been suggested even by some Republican leaders (not to mention Democrats) that this may help, rather than hinder, ISIS and others it is intended to weaken, by driving more disaffected youth to join terrorist ranks.

If this action was the only one Trump has opened, perhaps it would be less distressing; but it is only one of many listed in his [inauguration](#)

[address](#). His plans to build a wall along the entire southern USA border have soured his Mexican neighbours who view it as an insult, or worse, as a betrayal. His withdrawal from negotiations under the [Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement](#) (TPP) has further damaged relations with Mexico and doubtless other countries hoping to improve their national economies, even though TPP has been criticised as far from an ideal agreement. He has also stated his intention to open the [North American Free Trade Agreement](#) (NAFTA) for modification or cancelling. Modifications may be necessary, but there are less aggressive ways to proceed without offending other members. As the world’s most powerful nation — politically, militarily, and economically — the USA has little to be afraid of unless it irresponsibly alienates its traditional allies. However several of those nations are already under increased stress in a very short time of the Trump Presidency. And this President is wildly unpredictable.

After decades of using the Statue of Liberty as a symbol of American democracy and humanitarian concern in movies, books, and general publicity for the world’s less fortunate. Does the election of Donald Trump as the 45th President mark a significant and ongoing change in American policy? If so, it may mark the sinking of a proud nation, the leader of the Free World, into a quagmire of hypocrisy and an open and unprecedented level of disrespect.

Trump has four years to consolidate his position and, barring health issues which are quite possible at his age, he is going to work hard on shoring up what he has begun. It is possible that the mid-term elections may reduce his support in Washington if there is continued and perhaps increased public dissatisfaction since his inauguration. The other possibilities are impeachment, a slow and cumbersome process or, preferably, the rise of a strong non-racist opposing candidate in the next election.

— SLH

Read the full text of Trump’s inaugural speech [HERE](#).