

'Happy Dog Days to You'

Try singing it. We are about half way through the Dog Days, as the ancient Romans called the time between 3 July and 11 (or 15) August. In central Italy, but still to come in this part of the world this year, they were the hottest days of the summer.

One suspects that, just as the Canary Islands, the volcanic West African Atlantic archipelago, were not named for yellow birds but for their wild dogs (Latin 'canes') these might also be called the Canary Days. But not so.

They were named as the days preceding and following the rising of the star Sirius in the Northern Hemisphere

Sirius, somewhat larger than and 20 times more luminous than our sun, is 8.6 light years away from Earth. Venus may appear brighter because it is much closer but Sirius satellite radio recently took the name to itself. Its canine logo is self-explanatory. With another star, the orbit of which is somewhat irregular, as its travelling companion, Sirius (the star) completes its distant orbit around Earth every 49.9 years.

The ancient Egyptians called it 'Sothis', portraying it as a man with a dog's head and crediting it with the annual flooding of the Nile upon which their agriculture depended.

The Greeks and the Romans accused the extra heat that Sirius added to that of the sun of drying and burning their summer grass and grazing areas. The star's Latin name means 'searing' or 'scorching'.

The constellations have drifted since ancient times but, despite the size and brilliance of Sirius, we know now that the extra heat of summer is due to Earth's tilt. A friend who keeps closer tabs on these things than I do tells me that the Dog Star does not appear in the Southern Hemisphere. I must check that out sometime with friends 'Down Under' where they are, nevertheless, suffering 'serious' annual drought and forest fires.

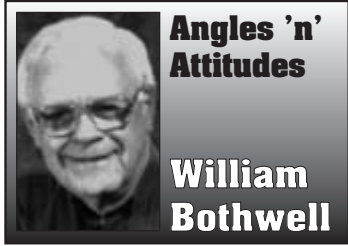
We also know that the heat we get from the sun is cooling down. No star, Old Sol included, retains its luminosity undiminished. As it declines the quality of its light changes.

At its hottest and most brilliant it gives out a white light, as is the

case with Sirius which is currently the brightest star.

As a white-hot star cools, it becomes yellow-hot. That is the case with our now middle aged sun. We can predict its future from other stars that are now only red-hot and from the dark ones that we no longer see because they have cooled as Earth once did.

Our planet's wonderful luminosity, as seen from space, appears as a bright jewel hanging in surrounding darkness. It shines with reflected light.



Angles 'n' Attitudes

William Bothwell

The human race may, with its greed and garbage, eventually make Earth uninhabitable.

Alternately, as expected by apocalyptic visionaries who ransack some ancient books for prophecies of things to come, a new heaven and new earth could be in place as early as 2017. But don't avoid long-term contracts. Others tell us that the sun is good for another 5,000 million years, admittedly with weakening life-giving power. Even the non-elect may survive.

Meanwhile, as the Dog Days progress, Europeans are packing for their favoured August vacation month. Anyone who has lived in London, Paris or Rome during the summer knows how difficult it is to plan a good in-town dinner party for the next few weeks.

Almost anybody one might wish to invite is somewhere else, out of town, up in Scotland, on a cruise or sunning themselves on the Costa del Sol.

Those who eschew crowded airports, tunnels and train stations drive to the seaside.

The result is that although Europe is my favourite out-of-Canada holiday venue, July (excessively touristy everywhere) and August (especially so in the E.U.) are the times I stay at home.

By doing so, I miss a lot that goes on over the sea, especially in this 2009 Year of Homecoming in Scotland.

There are those August events

of the Edinburgh Festival, particularly the great military tattoo against the backdrop of Castle Rock. There is, in addition, an explosion of Scottish culture in literary and artistic offerings. And there are the imported jazz and blues events that satisfy those poor souls who cannot abide the pipes. And don't forget the theatre at Pitlochry (Perthshire), a Fergus ON look-alike town that also stages an October Autumn Festival.

There is also the annual Welsh National Eisteddfod (meaning 'session' or 'assembly') from 1 to 8 August this year. It should be at least a once in a lifetime pilgrimage, look you, for anyone who has a drop of Welsh blood. The events include song and poetry in the Welsh language. Those who have always wanted to meet a Druid will find their modern counterparts at the Eisteddfod. It moves to different places each year. In 2009 it is at Bala, North Wales, not Muskoka.

There are comparable August events on the Continent. The gardens at Versailles are at their peak at this time of year although autumn seems better suited to the mood of a place the grandeur which is of another time. Thus far neither Vienna nor Salzburg have been on my travel schedule. It is a continuing disappointment. The former, with its palaces, cakes and ale and the latter with its August-long festival of music and opera, including children's opera films at the university and the daily free JumboTron offerings in the Kapitelplatz. Ah, Europa, our ancestral home or native lands! For, still, a majority, anyway!

All of the above seems to me to outclass the Calgary Stampede, the C.N.E. and (if you have a passport) August's National Goat Cheese Month in the U.S.A. As the years mount up one has fewer contemporaries with places from which to issue weekend invitations from cottage country as far away as Metis and the Near North. Their children have divided up and taken over those amenities.

Oh well, Dufferinshire is at its best in high summer.

Come to think of it, in a recession year and considering the cost and the hassle of August travel, is there any place you'd rather be than highest Ontario-ari-o?

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Deficit neutral healthcare? Impossible!

Sometimes, you just have to laugh. Everybody knows that politicians of all stripes excel at spinning whatever it is they want to push upon an unsuspecting public. But more often than not, while the spin is fairly obvious, there is at least a hint of reality.

Not so with the Obama administration's arguments in favour of a Canadian-style U.S. government-run healthcare monopoly.

The plan, if implemented in the way President Barack Obama has promised, would add about \$2 trillion - that's trillion with a "t" - on top of the \$2.5 trillion the U.S. already spends on health care - by the way, the U.S. government spends more per capita than our government does on the file.

Yet despite such enormous estimates - and history shows government estimates of program costs are always lower than actual costs - the Democrats are trying to convince a skeptical public that a government-run plan would not add to their already out-of-control deficit.

White House budget director Peter Orszag - apparently with a straight face - was quoted as saying that "The key thing is we need to get there (to a government health program) in a way that is deficit neutral."

Talk about the art of the impossible. Deficit neutral? Health care?

They should take a look at the spending they already shell out for health - and look north where healthcare, whatever you think of our scheme, is not only steadily eating up more of total federal, provincial and municipal budgets, but has more impact than any other single area of government spending.

Deficit neutral, indeed! It's one thing to argue for a program. After all, Obama did campaign on a new healthcare scheme. But it's quite another to tell bald-faced lies in order to get your way.

Unless the Democrats are prepared to impose massive increases across the board in taxes - which, obviously, no political party would survive - then the notion of adding trillions to government spending without affecting the bottom line makes Alice In Wonderland appear real.

There is no doubt that the American healthcare system has some serious flaws. (So, by the way, does our own, despite the constant bravado from the politicians and the healthcare elite that our system is

the best in the world. It isn't. Far from it. Fact is, the World Health Organization rates our program well down the list of developed nations. But we digress.

The large majority of Americans, in fact, enjoy better healthcare benefits than most Canadians do. Most have plans with their employers or buy private plans to look after their needs.

Your correspondent has several relatives who live in the U.S. and all report that their service is superior to the kind of pedestrian service most Canadians have learned to accept.

That having been said, however, there are many millions of Americans - estimates range from 20 to 50 million, but who really knows? - who do not have health coverage of any kind. Some of them chose not to pay for it, even though they can afford it. But most of those either don't have the option or can't afford what is being offered.

This is clearly wrong. But in order to fix that serious flaw it isn't necessary to reconstruct the entire system. As the old adage goes, if it ain't broke, don't fix it, and for the majority of Americans, as we've said, it ain't broke. So instead of seeing himself as the author of a vast new government health monopoly, Obama would better serve Americans - and spare even higher deficits - by concentrating on government assistance to those Americans who do not have health coverage.

Leave the others alone. Their plans are working very well.

Despite claims from the White house that this massive new spending program would be "deficit neutral," the independent, non-partisan Congressional Budget Office has concluded that the current Obama plan would increase deficits by a whopping \$239 billion over the next decade.

The U.S. is the only industrialized country without a government-run universal healthcare scheme. Canadians love to look down their noses at that, all the while ignoring the reality that Canada is the only industrialized nation which outlaws most forms of private healthcare.

Unlike both the U.S. and Canada, all the other developed countries offer a mix of public and private and almost all of them rate well ahead of Canada and the U.S. when it comes to service and value for money.

Both countries should be pondering that reality.



National Affairs

Claire Hoy

World War III

History reminds us (and some of us even remember) two major conflagrations within the past 100 years. These have at least been understandable, the desire for world domination. The enemy was identifiable and in fact its source was well known.

There are many trying to determine who our next enemy is and his origin. Terrorists tend to be out of sight, some being suicide bombers who plan not only on getting killed for a perceived noble cause but even intending to ensure his/her own destruction in the process. We can't even classify the combatants fighting on either side. It would be logical to oppose foreigners occupying one's homeland but to be mortally infuriated with folk, men, women and children, of one's own race and religion makes little sense.

Having identified potential opponents one must look deeper to see the much more serious enemy. To misquote Pogo, "We have seen the enemy and it is us". The frightening wars of the future may even result in failure of survival of our very way of life let alone our lives and those of our families.

Canada's environment in the future could very well be completely different from what we have come to know.

More importantly the global environment is drastically changing.

A recent book, Climate Wars, (Gwynne Dyer, 2008) puts a new wrinkle on global warming. Much of what has been published has emphasized impending hardships such as coastal flooding due to rising ocean levels and desertification of currently marginal agricultural lands.

What is not so apparent is the fact that millions of people will be forced from their homes and more millions will be seeking productive land to relieve their hunger. Without adequate food and a place to live the alternative is migration.

To where? The world is already overcrowded with many more millions still to come. A review of countries with space to spare leads us inevitably to one vast area with a relatively low population, Canada.

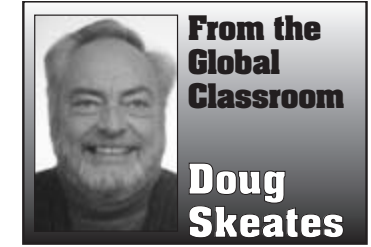
Could we be facing invasion by vast hordes of refugees forced to migrate to areas with unoccupied land in order to survive? Are we going to face a war in order to maintain our luxurious inheritance?

The only logical answer is ensuring that our land is not the hope of last resort for millions of refugees. Though we are only a tiny portion of a rapidly industrializing world we could become a model, a valuable example of what the world must become.

From a national perspective it is imperative that Canada enact legislation to ensure that industrial processes eliminate the consumption of fossil fuels and their accompanying pollution of the atmosphere.

If that means taxing the use of carbon that is one part of the equation. The other part of the 'carrot and the stick' is policies encouraging the development of alternatives, i.e. non-polluting sources of energy. It is already obvious that we sadly lack support for research and development.

Just as important is the personal perspective. Vast amounts of fossil fuels are used first in home heating and secondly in transportation. In the field of land use



From the Global Classroom

Doug Skeates

there is much we can do to alleviate the situation on our private land and especially at a municipal level.

However, we are our own worst enemies. What makes it all so ridiculous is that solutions are well within reach. We as a society must lead in changing many aspects of our lifestyle and help forestall the looming WW III. Society must avoid rising temperatures, i.e. global warming.

All prognoses are for us to continue increasing the CO2 in the atmosphere within my lifetime. That means an increase of at least 1 and probably 2 degrees Celsius in mean global temperature. At the recent meeting of the G8 finance ministers there was at least a pledge of holding the world to an additional 2 degrees by 2050.

We must do better than that or else face the inevitability of fighting for a place to live. The bottom line is attaining a level of 350 parts per million, down from even the current 368 ppm. As things are progressing now we are on track to reach 450 ppm before 2020.

Your Weekly Chuckle . . .

By KEITH HUNTER
 DAD: "Great news! We've saved enough to go to Disneyland!"
 SON: "That's great. When are we going?"
 DAD: "As soon as we save enough to get back."

Dipping Into the Past

Trapped at Riverview, large bear may be going to the Toronto Zoo

authorized in 1908 and 1909, are limited to use until the mid-summer vacation of 1910.

Albert Edward Johnston, on application made by Squire Pattullo to the Inspector of Prisons, was released upon the statutory certificate of the jail surgeon pursuant to statute and is now with county councillor Arch Greer, Reeve of Mulmur. There are two, David and James, in the county buildings yet and proceedings are also being taken to release John Carr, who is also an inmate there for insanity.

The latest sight mentioned for the new Central Prison farm, is at



Inglewood. The location is, 35 miles from Toronto. It and two sites closer to Toronto had been inspected by Messrs. Sutherland and Postlethwaite of the Provincial Secretary's Department. Hon. A. J. Matheson, Acting Provincial Secretary, said the Inglewood site "has been under consideration but nothing definite has been decided and no action will be taken pending the return of Hon. Mr. Hanna."

75 YEARS AGO
 Wednesday, July 26, 1934
 Late Wednesday, the King Paving Company began laying a 10-

foot-wide strip of pavement north from the Grey-Dufferin boundary below Dundalk. Fast progress is being made on the job and a large fleet of trucks keep a steady stream of material on the way to the cement mixer.

The car of Orangeville Mayor Parkinson, which was stolen from in front of the owner's residence on First Avenue on July 6 or early the following morning, has been recovered in Thessalon. The first news of the car came from Fenelon Falls, where the licence plates has been discarded. Two of the four men implicated in the theft are under arrest and police are hot on the trail of the others, who are believed to be in the vicinity of Sudbury.

Repairs being made to the electrical development plant of the Hydro Electric Power Commission at Eugenia Falls has made necessary some interruptions in service on the Eugenia system. However, these breaks are being made only between 4 and 7 a.m.

50 YEARS AGO

Wednesday, July 22, 1959
 The location of Dufferin County's Home for the Aged may be decided this week with Shelburne making a stronger bid for the home with an offer of seven free acres including four acres of what is now Berwick Park.

At a special meeting held July 8 Shelburne Council passed a motion that the Department of Highways be petitioned for approval of supplementary expenditure for construction and widening of Main Street between Adeline and the CPR tracks.

25 YEARS AGO

Wednesday, July 25, 1984
 Orangeville's expanded sewage treatment plant, featuring the latest in electronic controls, should be in operation by late September or early October.
 Mono township is acquiring a site on 5 Sideroad west of Highway 120 to supply a portion of its own gravel needs for road work.

125 YEARS AGO

Thursday, July 24, 1894
 J. C. Williams, of Riverview, a short time ago set a trap for a bear and on Sunday last it was found to have accomplished its purpose, holding securely a large bear by one paw. A rope was thrown around the animal's neck after the manner of lassoing, but with a slip knot and the other end of the rope being taken around a tree, the animal choked until it became powerless. Then its feet were securely tied and, a jumper being brought to the scene, the bear was brought into the village accompanied by about 60 or more residents who had turned out to witness the capture. The bear is full-grown but started-looking and at the time of writing chained up in Mr. William's yard. The owner is communicating with Ald. Harry Piper of the Toronto Zoo with a view to selling it to the zoo.

Valley Monday morning, destroying W. D. Taylor's large pump factory and B. G. Moore's stable with the contents of both. Cause of the fire is not known although it is presumed a spark from the forge in the factory dropped through the floor to the hay in the stable underneath.
 The Orangeville Sun reports an amusing incident at the C.P.R. station in Brampton when visitors from Orangeville had assembled for the return trip from the July 12 celebrations there. The band was playing a tune and the boys and about 200 other people did not hear the conductor yell "all aboard" and the train pulled out without them and they had to remain until Tuesday morning.
 Dr. Pyne, Ontario's Minister of Education, has issued an announcement containing the text-book regulations just adopted by his department. The circular gives a list of the text-books to be used in public schools, the lower and middle schools of high and continuation schools and collegiate institutes. The old textbooks,

100 YEARS AGO

Thursday, July 22, 1909
 A serious fire occurred at Maple