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## Electric Scotland's Weekly Newsletter for March 24th, 2017

To see what we've added to the Electric Scotland site view our What's New page at:  
<http://www.electricscotland.com/whatsnew.htm>

To see what we've added to the Electric Canadian site view our What's New page at:  
<http://www.electriccanadian.com/whatsnew.htm>

For the latest news from Scotland see our ScotNews feed at:  
<http://www.electricscotland.com/>

### Electric Scotland News

I find I'm spending at least 3+ hours a day reading the news and blogs. I feel I need to keep abreast of happenings on Brexit, the EU and anything that might affect Scotland. This means I'm also covering goings on across the EU as it seems many Scots ignore what is happening in the rEU but what goes on there can have a major impact on Scotland.

I notice that polls are no longer providing the clarity they used to. I mean if the polls had been correct Trump would never have won the Presidency, the Conservatives would never have won an overall majority and Brexit would not have happened.

There is also a lot of talk about fake news and I see a lot of it going around. This means if you are truly interested in the future of Scotland you can't take any politicians word on anything and you also can't accept the media's take on anything. This means it is a real challenge getting to the real facts. This means you need to spend time looking for the original documents and reports and also satisfy yourself that these reports are unbiased. That is a lot of work.

You also need to be aware of your own bias as that also colours your own attitude to the various reports you read.

It's been my opinion over the years that Scotland has not been well served under any of our parliamentary groups and that's Labour/Lib Dems and SNP. I'd thus personally like to see the Conservatives have a go to see if they can do any better.

I'd hoped that under a devolved government we would have pursued a more Scottish agenda to tackle things differently but I see no great vision coming out of Scotland. I don't blame the SNP as they have never hidden their remit of getting an Independent Scotland no matter what. I do however question the population at large as to why so many people seem content to just accept whatever they are told by whatever party holds power.

Like if we truly want an excellent health service then we should say so and be prepared to pay more in taxes to get it. I don't however see anyone asking the Scottish people if they would be prepared to pay more for that. Like it's clear education is in crisis but again there is no sign of anyone asking the Scottish people if they'd be prepared to pay more council tax to make it better.

Then as we now permit 16 and 17 year olds to vote why are we not including some information in our schools on how to obtain facts on Independence and the EU? Where can they go to get unbiased information?

Then if you look at Scottish business we see that exports to the rUK are so much larger than any exports to other countries and expanding strongly. Why is that? It's really because we all work with Sterling and we all speak English and so sales to England are not really seen by most businesses as exports.

At the end of the day we need to export a lot more to enable us to generate wealth in Scotland but that means selling goods and services to the rEU and around the world. We seem incapable of doing that so we must find out why and fix this issue. If we can't generate more wealth as a country we'll see continued increases in our debt which is simply not sustainable.

We also seem to be in the habit of blaming Westminster for all our woes. It's as if we simply can't take any responsibility for our own actions or lack of. If we truly want an Independent Scotland then we need to ask ourselves what that really means. Like being in the EU means we have to cede much of our independence to other countries so is that what the Scottish people actually want?

It's my view that instead of an IndyRef2 we need a referendum on EU membership with totally free discussion outside party lines to discuss this. We already know some SNP Members actually voted to leave and many others admitted to not wanting to vote remain but did so out of loyalty to the party.

In my view that is not good enough. We really need a proper debate on the issue and not skewed by party obligations. However Nicola Sturgeon has been quoted as saying that if we won Independence there would be no referendum on EU membership. And of course all party leaders argued that we should remain and yet over 1 million Scots voted to leave. I think many people that want an Independent Scotland don't want us to cede any of our new Independence to the EU.

I did notice a poll this week in which the rUK see Brexit as more important than keeping Scotland in the Union. I see that as troubling as whatever Scotland decides we are still going to need rUK to export our goods and services to.

My own sources include these two sites...

Chokka Blog at <http://chokkablog.blogspot.com>

They have a video report which you might find worth viewing at:  
<http://chokkablog.blogspot.ca/2015/07/chokkablog-videos.html>

To be frank I give this site very high marks as a site I can totally trust. It focuses on our finances.

Sceptical Scot at <http://sceptical.scot/>

Scotland's premier non-tribal forum for passionate, informed debate. Sceptical Scot is for all who care about Scotland's future, regardless of how they vote: for party, independence or union, EU or Brexit. We aim to provide an arena that is both broader and deeper than current online/print offers with a rich diet of well-researched, polemical, thought-provoking writing.

My instinct is that this blog is skewed a little toward Brexit remainers and pro independence but on the whole well worth viewing.

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In 2017 there are events from April 2nd - 11th that are all forming a part of Tartan Week. A time to celebrate all that the Scots have done to the building of the United States.

See what's on at: <http://www.americanscottishfoundation.com/events/index.html>

Scottish News from this weeks newspapers

Note that this is a selection and more can be read in our ScotNews feed on our index page where we list news from the past 1-2 weeks. I am partly doing this to build an archive of modern news from and about Scotland as all the newsletters are archived and also indexed on Google and other search engines. I might also add that in newspapers such as the Guardian, Scotsman, Courier, etc. you will find many comments which can be just as interesting as the news story itself and of course you can also add your own comments if you wish.

Common Fisheries Policy

Leaving the Common Fisheries Policy will enable us to empower local fishing communities

Read more at:

<http://brexitcentral.com/leaving-common-fisheries-policy-will-enable-us-empower-local-fishing-communities/>

Child poverty and inequality rises in Scotland

Latest poverty and income inequality figures show both rising in the last year

Read more at:

<https://www.holyrood.com/articles/news/child-poverty-and-inequality-rises-scotland>

Plan for Britain

A new web site by the Government on it's Plan for Britain during Brexit

Read more at:

<https://www.planforbritain.gov.uk/>

Brexit more important than keeping the UK together

Sixty per cent of respondents agreed that Britain's EU departure mattered more than stopping the UK's break-up, while just 27 per cent disagreed.

Read more at:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/03/17/brexit-important-keeping-uk-together-public-say-poll-telegraph/>

Food and drink exports from Scotland hit record high

Food and drink exports from Scotland rose to a record £5.5bn last year, government figures show.

Read more at:

<http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-business-39314636>

Canada "At Front Of Queue" For Brexit Trade Deals

The report affirms that CANZUK countries are top priority for the UK government, as Canada will now join Australia and New Zealand in being the first to establish trade deals following the UK's departure from the European Union.

Read more at:

<http://www.canzukinternational.com/2017/03/canada-at-front-of-queue-for-brexit.html?m=1>

Scotland must go beyond Europe to become truly global

by Eben Wilson in Think Scotland

Read more at:

[http://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkpolitics/articles.html?read\\_full=13067](http://www.thinkscotland.org/thinkpolitics/articles.html?read_full=13067)

The BBC's bias against Brexit could do real harm to Britain

It is not serving Britain

Read more at:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/2017/03/21/bbcs-bias-against-brexit-could-do-real-harm-britain/>

Lady Susan Rice of the Scottish Fiscal Commission

As the Scottish Fiscal Commission prepares to take on a statutory forecasting role, Holyrood talks to commission chair Lady Susan Rice

Read more at:

<https://www.holyrood.com/articles/inside-politics/making-numbers-add-interview-lady-susan-rice-scottish-fiscal-commission>

Dundee's digital sector growth outpaces rest of UK

Dundee's digital economic output surged 171% in the four years to 2015.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/business/companies/tech/dundee-s-digital-sector-growth-outpaces-rest-of-uk-1-4400033>

Bones of clan massacre victims found in Eigg cave

More than 50 human bones found in an island cave have been identified as belonging to the victims of one of Scotland's worst clan atrocities.

Read more at:

<http://www.scotsman.com/news/bones-of-clan-massacre-victims-found-in-eigg-cave-1-4400250>

Radical shakeup of dinosaur family tree

Cat-sized Scottish fossil proposed as candidate for common dinosaur ancestor in controversial study that could overthrow a century of dinosaur classification

Read more at:

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2017/mar/22/scottish-fossil-may-cause-radical-shakeup-of-dinosaur-family-tree-saltopus>

## Electric Canadian

Chronicles of Canada

Added Volume 23: The Cariboo Trail: A Chronicle of the Gold-fields of British Columbia

I might add that I've found text copies of these volumes so have added a link to them on the page. I also found a page where you can get audio copies so have placed a link to these as well.

You can read this at: <http://www.electriccanadian.com/history/chronicles/index.htm>

D. C. Beard

Author of many books on bush craft for the Boy Scouts of America. I thought I'd bring you a few of them as having found them I enjoyed them and so hope you do as well.

Added another book, "New Ideas for Work and Play - What a Girl can make or do" in which you get to read about what girls can make with hammer and saw and lots more which you can read at:

<http://www.electriccanadian.com/pioneering/beard/>

Conrad Black

I've always had a lot of time for Conrad Black and so as he writes from Canada on a number of issues of interest from around the world I'm intending to include links to his writings for you to view. This week there are two articles...

A Grand New Foreign Policy

<http://www.conradblack.com/1278/a-grand-new-foreign-policy>

The Canadian Senate's misguided purge

<http://www.conradblack.com/1277/the-canadian-senate-misguided-purge>

## Electric Scotland

The Forfar Directory and Year Book

A most interesting publication with lots of wee stories and articles. I have now added the 1894 edition which you can read at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/forfar/direct/>

Here are 3 wee stories from this edition...

Occupation for Children

The habits of children prove that occupation is of necessity with most of them. They love to be busy, even about nothing, still more to be usefully employed. With some children it is a strongly developed physical necessity, and if not turned to account will be productive of evil. Children should be encouraged, or if indolently disinclined to it, should be disciplined into performing for themselves every little office relative to the toilet which they are capable of performing. They should also keep their own clothes and other possessions in neat order, and fetch for themselves whatever they want; in short, they should learn to be as independent of the services of others as possible.

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ON one occasion, when a young American actor was acting Richard the Third in Philadelphia, some of the underlings kept their hats on while he was on the stage, whereas the stage manager remonstrated, requesting them in a whisper to uncover, as they were in the presence of a king, to which admonition he received the following characteristic reply: "Fiddlestick! I guess we care nothing about kings in this country."

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The Biter Bit.

A CERTAIN policeman on duty at the gates of one of the London docks has the name of being one of the sharpest and most cunning amongst his comrades. No person could ever boast of getting any excisable goods, such as tobacco or cigars, out of the dock whilst he was on duty, and he was proud of the same. If he was offered a bribe he always took it, and had the offender arrested afterwards in the act.

One day, however, a ship arrived from India, and the skipper, a cute, hard-headed Scotsman, came ashore in the evening and

proceeded to the gates. Walking up boldly to the policeman, he whispered in his ear—"I've got some rare tobacco and some valuable cigars, which the Customs folk have overlooked, and I want to smuggle them oot th' morn's nicht. It'll be all richt, I suppose?" and at the same time slipping half-a-crown into the policeman's hand. The redoubtable Robert smiled a malignant smile, and said it would be all right, and the merry skipper passed out of the gates, and went on his way rejoicing.

The next night the skipper was walking boldly out of the dock-gates when he was seized by the policeman, and taken into his watch box, where he was confronted by a sergeant, and underwent a thorough search. Much to the officer's chagrin, however, neither tobacco, cigars, or anything of an excisable nature was found on his person, and he asked the skipper what he had done with them.

"Oh!" said the skipper quite innocently, "I had them on me last nicht when I gave you the half-croon, and I just thoct I'd better tak' them oot there and then, which I did."

It was remarkable how much that policeman aged during the next twenty-four hours.

Enumeration of the Inhabitants of Scotland

Taken from the Government Abstracts of 1801, 1811, 1821, 1831. These two interesting publications open our eyes to many interesting facts on social and business Scotland.

You can view these at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/books/pdf/Enumeration.htm>

Clan Wallace Society

Got in their Winter/Spring 2017 newsletter which you can view at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/familytree/newsletters/wallace/index.htm>

Papers relating to William, First Earl of Gowrie

And Patrick Ruthven, his fifth and last surviving son by John Bruce (1867)

You can view this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/nation/gowrie.htm>

William Roughead

Added two of his books, Glengarry's Way and Other Stories and also Twelve Scots Trials. Added links to them from the foot of our Law page.

You can read these at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/law/>

Celebrated Criminal Trials in Scotland

From A.D. 1536 to 1784 with Historical and Critical Remarks by Hugo Arnot

You can read this at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/history/law/trials1536-1784.pdf>

The Gilmers in America

Gilmer, Gilmor, Gilmour, and Gilmore names discussed in this book which is a sept of the Morrison clan..

Added a link to this book on our Clan Morrison page at:

<http://www.electricscotland.com/webclans/m/morriso.html>

## The Story

For the record: Conrad Black on Canada's tradition of greatness

From Champlain to Carleton to St. Laurent and Howe, Conrad Black's Civitas speech tracks Canadian history and what should come next.

Conrad Black spoke at the Civitas Society's national conference, a convening of top conservative minds to discuss the state of the movement. Below, a transcript of his remarks, examining Canada's history and his thoughts on how it can achieve greatness.

The title of this address reflects my contention that since the first arrival of the Europeans there has always been a vocation to create and maintain a great and distinctive country in the northern half of this continent. No one with the least familiarity with Samuel de

Champlain's 32 years as governor or lieutenant governor of New France, could fail to see that he foresaw a great nation in Canada. He often stated this in his letters to Cardinal Richelieu, the omnipotent French prime minister, and to the French kings Henry IV and Louis XIII, and in the books which he published. Of course, he expected it to be entirely French, except for the Natives, whom he respected more than almost anyone who governed Canada after him, until relatively recently.

Champlain's accomplishments in mapping and exploring, describing and developing a vast part of eastern North America, in befriending the Native peoples despite some frictions, in founding Quebec and developing the fur trade, leave no doubt that he was a great visionary and an enlightened governor. He promised King Louis XIII that ultimately there would be a great capital, Ludovicus, named after him in this French empire in the New World and broadly foresaw the development of cities, harbours, canals, and roads.

Especially in his early years in Canada, he and the several score of his countrymen who wintered in what is now Quebec faced desperate cold, scurvy, loneliness, Native hostility, and frequently indifference in Paris. His courage and perseverance through decades of travail and ordeal were almost beyond admiration. Not the least of his talents was his high political acuity in lobbying Richelieu, and naming the Cardinal's famous confidant, the original grey eminence, Joseph du Tremblay, as the editor of his book elaborating his plan for Canada.

I believe that Champlain began to spin the thread of faith and vision that founded Canada and has guided it progressively through 400 years, the great majority of which were times of acute uncertainty about the prospects for the development of a viable state in Canada. Once Europeans were established here, the inhabitants were bound to be reasonably prosperous because of the natural resources of Canada, despite its frequently hostile climate. But for Canada to become and remain a viable state independent of the United States required an almost miraculous series of unlikely steps to occur. First, it had to be French and not English. Otherwise it would be assimilated into and governed with the English-speaking jurisdictions in what became the original 13 states of the United States. Second, New France would have to become economically self-sufficient, to enjoy the patronage of France, and not to be too burdensome to it, and to resist conquest and assimilation by the American colonists or revolutionaries.

The great intendant, Jean Talon, accomplished this in the 1670s, by developing a variety of industries including brewing, shipbuilding, the manufacture of iron goods and basic textiles, and various forms of agriculture, as well as by the importation of 1,000 nubile French girls from whom today approximately seven million French Canadians and Franco-Americans are descended. Louis Frontenac, a childhood friend of Louis XIV, alternately defeated and conciliated the Natives and repulsed an American assault on Quebec in 1690. He vastly enhanced and modernized the city of Quebec and extended the fur trade.

French Canada itself produced swashbuckling explorers and warriors. The d'Ibervilles of Montreal captured British forts in Hudson Bay, British settlements in Newfoundland, and founded the present American cities of Biloxi and New Orleans and captured Havana from the Spanish. Pierre de La Vérendrye was born in Three Rivers in 1685, fought at the Battle of Malplaquet against the Duke of Marlborough in 1709, and returned to Canada and explored the far Great Lakes and the mid-west almost to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Louis Jolliet was also born in Three Rivers and with Jacques Marquette, he discovered and mapped the Mississippi River in the 1670s. These were great foundation-stones of this country, laid in the 160 years of the French regime. Very few English, or now even French-speaking Canadians, realize today what an amazing achievement it was for New France, with a population of only about 20,000 in 1700, to span this continent from Hudson Bay to the Gulf of Mexico and from the Atlantic coast to the Rocky Mountains.

The next part of the sequence was [that] Canada would have to become part of the British Empire, because the strategic division between France and Britain for centuries was that France had the greatest army and Britain the greatest navy, and so no desirable French overseas possession could be secured against the British. Thus did Great Britain take over North America and India and large swaths of other continents. Britain was excluded from continental Europe, but overseas, France was effectively confined to Britain's leavings.

But almost as Canada became British, the Americans had to cease to be British, or the two jurisdictions would have been combined and the French Canadians would, as they have always feared, be assimilated by the larger English-speaking population of North America. In the process of the American secession from the British Empire, it was necessary for a significant number of Americans who wished to remain British to move to Canada, in order to secure the protection of the British colonial authorities. These officials, though many of them are celebrated in Canadian lore and geographic recognition, were essentially cynics who, if there were not a profound moral debt in Britain to the loyalty of the British inhabitants of Canada who had fled the American revolutionaries, would have been capable of trading the formerly French colony to the Americans for other consideration.

Though New France had passed into history, and conditions had changed radically, the genius of adoptive Canadian statesmen had not perished. In the 1770s, Sir Guy Carleton, Lord Dorchester, the governor of Canada for 20 years ending in 1796, instantly remade Champlain's dream of a powerful and rich New France into a powerful and rich Anglo-French Canada. He quickly came to like the French Canadians, who found him a much more congenial governor than the French had usually been.

He presciently saw the American Revolution coming and returned to London to lobby for four years for the passage of his Quebec Act. This was adopted just in time in 1774 and guaranteed the French civil law, preservation of the French language, and the free

practice of the Roman Catholic religion in exchange for French Canada's promise of loyalty to the British crown. Both sides of the Quebec Act firmly adhered to their promises. The Quebec Act was fiercely attacked in the American Declaration of Independence as an attempt to import the French civil law into the American colonies (which was nonsense), and was widely denounced in those colonies as a surrender to popery.

As a result of the Quebec Act and Carleton's military leadership, by the narrowest of margins Canada declined George Washington's invitation to join the American Revolution. The French-Canadians and a small British garrison drove Benjamin Franklin and the then loyal revolutionary Benedict Arnold out of Canada. In his second term as governor, Carleton was instrumental in setting up what became the province of Ontario and began the institutional structure of a bicultural country.

Once Canada was under British control and an Anglo-French society, and the Americans were independent and not particularly friendly with the British, Canada had to take the next step on the march to nationhood and develop a talent for Anglo-French co-operation. And it had the exacting challenge of winking its autonomy out of the British without so offending the British that they lost interest in the maintenance of their position in Canada and traded it away to the United States. If Canada were to succeed it could not continue indefinitely to be a British colony. But it could not elect to revolt as the Americans had done, because dispensing with the British would only ensure an early American conquest of Canada. This, of course would not have been the worst of fates, but it would have been the end of any idea of an independent and distinctive Canadian nation.

The explorer Alexander Mackenzie, a Scot who emigrated as a child to Montreal by way of New York, crossed the continent by land and arrived at the Arctic shore in 1789 (following the river now named after him), and on the Pacific coast in 1793. I don't want to make invidious comparisons, but we did get to the Pacific overland 10 years ahead of the Americans. General Sir Isaac Brock was particularly important in Canada's again narrow survival of an American attack in the War of 1812. While Britain and America drew that war, Canada was the only winner, as it gained a lot of credibility opposite both the British and the Americans. The large number of newly arrived Americans did not defect to their invading former countrymen as had been feared, and in the half-century following that war Canada pursued autonomy as a jurisdiction, as Canadians demanded the same right to elect those who governed them as other British subjects and as the former subjects in the United States already possessed.

Robert Baldwin and Louis-Hippolyte LaFontaine only sought the achievement of responsible government and the secularization of the University of Toronto and of much land that had been consigned to the churches. They achieved this, another great step toward national greatness and withdrew from public life like Cincinnatus. They relied on the Gilbert and Sullivan revolutionary outbursts of McKenzie and Papineau to worry the British without overly annoying them.

Please appreciate their achievement of conciliation, when in successive elections in the 1840s, the skulduggery of the colonial regime caused their electoral defeat to the parliament of the so-called United Province of Canada designed by Lord Durham to assimilate the French-Canadians, Baldwin had LaFontaine elected for a district near Toronto and LaFontaine had Baldwin elected for Rimouski, an entirely French-speaking constituency.

Throughout this period, the United States had been walking on eggshells toward the resolution of the crisis of slavery. Finally, with a terrible Civil War in which more than 750,000 Americans died in a population of only 32 million, five American states were smashed to rubble and burned to ashes by the Union armies of General Grant and General Sherman, slavery was abolished and the insurrection was suppressed. As Canada executed a delicate minuet with the British, gaining autonomy but maintaining British protection, it also generously encouraged and received more than 40,000 fugitive slaves without seriously antagonizing the United States. It is a matter of some legitimate interest to this country that the fierce Anglophobic slaveholder, General Andrew Jackson, is now being replaced on the twenty-dollar American banknote by Harriet Tubman, an African-American anti-slavery activist who lived in the 1850s in St. Catharines, Ont., and regarded herself as a Canadian.

The United States then possessed the most powerful army and the greatest generals in the world and had not much appreciated overt British partisanship for the insurrectionist Confederacy. In these circumstances Canadian statesmen, particularly John A. Macdonald, George-Etienne Cartier, and George Brown, recognized that if the country was not to drop into the lap of the United States that was now emerging as one of the world's greatest powers, the English and French of Canada would have to unite in devising a new form of country. Thus was born the only transcontinental, bicultural, parliamentary confederation in the history of the world. And it has served the country quite well for nearly 150 years. Of all countries in the world of Canada's population or larger, only the British and Americans have political institutions that are older.

Macdonald conceived and led every stage of the construction of one of the engineering marvels of the world, the Canadian Pacific Railway. It was built over much more rugged terrain, the Canadian Shield, than much of the American track across the continent, and as Canada did not have serious financial markets, it had to be financed in New York and London. Leading financiers in these cities did not at that point have great confidence in the likely viability of Canada. Macdonald managed the supreme mastery of two potentially mortal crises, the impending bankruptcy of Canadian Pacific and the 1885 Riel rebellion calling for American annexation of the West, by tying them together: he utilized the railway to suppress the rebellion, and then secured parliamentary funding out of gratitude for the deliverance of the country from Western revolt, to complete the railway. Macdonald also supported the acquisition of extensive steamship fleets to cross both oceans at the terminal points of his great railway. He devised a tariff structure to foster

Canadian industry and he rebuffed rather assertive American efforts to promote the peaceful annexation of Canada to the United States. I don't want to leave the subject of Macdonald, especially as he has been unfairly criticized recently, without making the point that even by the standards of the times of Lincoln, Disraeli, Gladstone, and Bismarck, Macdonald was a great statesman, and was so regarded by the first three of those men. He and Bismarck never crossed paths.

Macdonald and the great Liberal leader, Wilfrid Laurier, governed Canada for 33 of its first 44 years as an autonomous confederation. They both recognized the necessity of a double majority of English and French speaking support for major initiatives. And they both continued the tradition of public sector-private sector co-operation which originated with Jean Talon in the 17th century.

Laurier personified the bicultural nature of the country; he compromised on the issue of Roman Catholic schools in Western Canada, and he addressed the issue of a steady drainage of population to the United States as that country expanded with immense waves of immigration, by an extraordinarily ambitious program of immigration to keep pace. Immigration to Canada was aggressively promoted throughout Europe and vast tracts of land with free passage to Canada were given away to encourage a more steeply growing Canadian population. In 1913, two years after Laurier had left government but under his policy, Canada, which had a population of a little over seven million, admitted 402,000 immigrants. This was equivalent to admitting almost two million immigrants in one year today. Having had as little as 1/15th of the population of the United States at various early times, that ratio is now approximately 1 to 9 and Canada has rather more people than did the United States at the end of the U.S. Civil War.

For Canada, the immense contiguity of the United States was both an opportunity and a severe challenge. Canada's successes were obvious except when measured against the meteoric rise of its immense neighbour. But throughout the three centuries from the time of Champlain to the First World War, in which Canada and the United States ended up as allies in arms, there was an almost constant threat of the Canadian project succumbing to what Americans often considered their "manifest destiny." And in much of the last century, the benign and not threatening presence of America and its immense popular cultural influence have frequently generated enthusiasm in this country for a federal union which would of course only be the subsuming of Canada into its neighbour. It has taken the collapse of Quebec separatism after several tense decades, and an unprecedented series of reversals and an extended period of political confusion in the government of the United States for this last threat to recede.

Where as late as 1999 almost 20 per cent of Canadians expressed in polls an interest in federal union with the U.S., the corresponding figure today would be almost negligible. Canadians are not in general anti-American; but the astounding, unprecedented, and in some respects intimidating rise and rise of America left some Canadians improvising spurious, envious, and even spiteful reasons to distinguish this country from the United States.

While there is always room for improvement, in general Canada has made its point that it is a well-governed and well-functioning country. It has always been a truism that Canada operated politically, in a sports metaphor, between the 30 yard lines, unlike the United States which knows peaks of genius and depravity, wealth and poverty, that are generally outside the experience of other nations. The reason for this must reside in the national American genius for showmanship, the encouragement of individuality, and the scale upon which the United States operates, which has been beyond what the world had previously imagined to be possible.

Though the placid nature of Canadian life is sometimes mocked, including by Canadians, the fact that fewer than 200 people have died from civil strife in the last 200 years is a remarkable testament to the talents of Canadians in working out problems.

In practice nations are great because they are sufficiently numerous and strategically and culturally rich that they have an unusually high impact upon the world, particularly if they are the principal source of one of the world's distinguished civilizations. A dramatic history is also useful in building a national mythos.

Of course, Canada is only the third or possibly fourth (after India) English-speaking country, and the second French-speaking country. Historical drama is usually blood-soaked wars and revolutions and no sane Canadian regrets that we have been almost completely spared that, apart from our voluntary sacrifices for the cause of freedom in the world wars when this country was not itself under threat. And while a member of the G7 countries, Canada is the junior member and we should not celebrate our escape from universal inattention by taking on the airs of a national bearer of a great civilization as are France, Germany, Italy, Russia, Japan, and China and the British and Americans jointly.

If we are to be objectively great, we will have to do it by example and by the compelling quality of the society that we build here. All major countries except possibly India, are now in a policy stasis that arouses broad public discontent. And I think the time is opportune for a radically new series of social and fiscal policies and foreign initiatives that will be welcome in themselves and indicative to the world of Canada's unsuspected, even by ourselves, political creativity.

I will conclude, if I may, by suggesting a few such initiatives.

We should abolish incarceration for non-violent offenders other than for the most gigantic financial offences and the most incorrigible recidivists. We imprison non-violent people out of habit, as we long imprisoned people in debt, and this generally causes a deterioration in the personality and character of the individual so sentenced, and is horrendously expensive. I am all for punishment



of crime and for the repentance of wrongdoing, but this can be accomplished to the public's benefit by requiring extensive community service performed by people living at large but in obligatorily Spartan circumstances but not brutal, impersonal, or celibate isolation.

Everyone must have the means to defend themselves legally just as they must have adequate access to medical attention, whether they possess the means to pay for these services unaided or not. Legal aid will have to be vastly expanded to give most people any chance against the power of prosecutors, and we must never approach the scandalous condition of the United States where 99.5 per cent of prosecutions are successful, 97 per cent without trial, because of the hideous perversion of the plea-bargain system.

We should have a comprehensive system of continuous consolidation of statutes and regulations to reduce their unceasing proliferation. We must end the ever-escalating requirement for a larger numbers of lawyers to conduct what amounts to a restrictive legal cartel of legislators, practitioners, prosecutors, and the bench, all swaddled in pious claptrap about the rule of law being all that raises us above the level of the jungle. Of course we must tolerate and encourage private sector medical care, the costs of which must be tax-deductible to the patients.

There should be medical users' fees for those who can afford them and the principle of universality in social benefits should be varied to account for the means of the recipient and those who are thus able to pay more would benefit from tax deductions for necessary or at least advisable medical expenses.

Unionization has been one of the principal causes of the terrible destruction of the quality of state education systems throughout the Western world and it should be ended. Instead of collective-bargaining, and the regular occurrence of strikes in the school years, and the constant atmosphere of blackmail of parents with the threat of unscheduled school closings, conditions of work should be determined by citizens' panels representing all interested parties and with clear guidelines to provide a reasonable income for teachers hinged to fair evaluation of performance. Schools should cease to be daycare centers and the scandalous decline of public standards of education throughout the West, which is reflected and amplified in the deteriorating quality of information and entertainment, must be reversed. The federal government should withhold educational assistance from non-reforming provinces. Why shouldn't Canada take the lead in this?

Fiscally, Canada should lead the world back to hard currencies by providing a yardstick of measurement against the currency composed of a combined standard of gold, oil, and consumer necessities. There is now no currency in the world that has any value except in relation to other currencies and they are all accelerating down the path of inflationary debasement. Canada is uniquely qualified as a rich and latterly very fiscally responsible country, to take this step that would be widely emulated and admired.

Nothing could be more obvious than that the way to greater prosperity without inflation or stoked-up deficits is selective increases of the HST as it applies to elective spending, and reductions in personal and corporate income taxes especially of people of modest means and of small businesses.

When inflation threatens, instead of raising interest rates, which merely pours gasoline on the fire until a bone-cracking recession is induced, we should have standby authority to eliminate taxes on all forms of saving and investment, and to raise taxes on elective spending. This would be a first line of defence against inflation that would reduce the impact of the current widespread policy of simply strangling the economy with higher interest rates.

We have gone as far as we can trying to reduce poverty with the traditional welfare system. I propose a slight and self-reducing wealth tax, that would be paid by wealthy taxpayers funding projects for poverty reduction that they would devise and direct. They would be approved as charities are approved, and the tax would be reduced as poverty declined. In this way, we would put the most agile financial minds to work attacking poverty and incentivizing them to eliminate it.

Canada should pursue some level of domestic ownership in the automobile industry and a higher level of autonomy in key defence production industries including shipbuilding and sophisticated aviation. We have never recovered from John Diefenbaker's cancellation of the Avro Arrow and of our entire jet engine industry with it. To this end we must revive the tradition of Jean Talon, the railway-builder Francis Hincks, John A. Macdonald, Laurier and his immigration minister Clifford Sifton, and C.D. Howe. There is nothing embarrassing in the fact that Canada, to advance up the ladder of serious states, has frequently needed recourse to co-operation between private financial markets and industrial expertise and the strength of the federal government as a silent partner. Every serious country in the world has done this, including, disguised in its huge defence budget, the United States.

In foreign policy, Canada is uniquely placed to propose drastic and much-needed reforms to the United Nations, and NATO. As Canada is a founding member of both organizations with an unblemished record in them, our views would be taken seriously. The United Nations must cease to be primal scream therapy for its most despotic and corrupt members. Any country that does not achieve at least China's inadequate level of respect for human liberties should lose the right to vote and be only an observer until it reaches that threshold. I only cite China as the benchmark because as a practical matter it would be inadvisable to try to disenfranchise so important a country. Members' votes should be reapportioned on the basis of respect for human rights, national economic product, and population.

Obviously there would be a great deal of objection to any such reform but it would get attention and it would attract the support of most responsible countries and could gradually be negotiated into some sort of compromise to be a vast improvement on the present disgraceful condition of that organization.

NATO should be reconstituted as a worldwide defensive alliance of all democracies, which could accept associate states that are not democracies, and which would co-operate in upholding and extending the concept of an attack upon one is an attack upon all. Countries that completely ignored agreed-to targets of military spending and capability for years on end and merely coasted under the implicit American guarantee of their security, a category that unfortunately now includes Canada, would be suspended from membership until they met the target.

Canada is one of the very few important countries that is fiscally and politically capable of embarking on such a comprehensive reform agenda as I have sketchily outlined. We are not going to achieve greatness by being the biggest, most powerful, most exciting, or most culturally uplifting country, and I think we are all tired of trying to get there solely by imagining ourselves to be the most virtuous. Canada can now do more than tug at the trouser-leg of the United States and United Kingdom, though we were quite proficient at that for many years, apart from the Diefenbaker and Trudeau eras.

If we were to do anything remotely along the lines of what I have suggested, the level of recognition and influence we would achieve would vastly exceed anything imagined even by the great men, many of whom I have just mentioned, who have built this country to its present enviable state.

Thank you.

<http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/for-the-record-conrad-black-on-canadas-tradition-of-greatness/>

And that's it for this week and I hope you all have a good weekend.

Alastair