



Michael W. Popejoy*

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This editorial is a response to an editorial in UK's premier journal *Public Health* volume 127 (November 2013) (p. 973-974) written by F. Sim and P. Macki, Editors for *Public Health*, a peer reviewed journal of the Royal Society for Public Health. The title of their editorial was *Heritage and Honour at Risk*. The one page, two column piece opens with a brief introduction of the double helix structure of DNA by Crick and Watson; also known as Watson and Crick here in America; then, as I get to the bottom of the first column, the editorial suddenly turns nasty without warning with a shot across the pond at America for no apparent good reason. America gets criticized a lot and certainly American deserves a lot of criticism; however, we have broad shoulders and we can take it. I remain convinced that I have to answer what seems to be an embedded sidebar in the editorial since the criticism may not be totally accurate; and I did respond to the editorial; however, I am unsure it will be published in the UK since it would be critical of UK's premier journal in public health and its editors. Sim and Macki do not approve of the implementation process of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) or what is lovingly known here as Obamacare. The editors were "astonished when the House of Representatives effectively closed down America." Well, not so fast. Yet, they continue to state that "there seems to be no American equivalent to the British notion of un-parliamentary behavior and most of us on this side (UK) of the Atlantic are not used to this kind of conduct in government, played out with apparent complete disregard for the well-being of the U.S. population." Yes, the federal government was shut down but not for the first time in history and most certainly not for the last. I know of no reported casualties during these shutdowns. What is not obvious to outsiders is that local and state governments are not shut down and neither are

any functions of the private sector. So, life pretty much goes on even if some parts of the federal government are furloughed.

I am certain President Obama eagerly wants a legacy more prestigious than just being the first American black president and winning an undeserved Nobel Peace Prize which even today, after the fact, he still has not earned. He will only win a place in history with other great American presidents if he gets Obamacare up and running successfully as an enduring and visible legacy to his presidency. What we are seeing today is a very complex untested program that has to be implemented across a broad geographical area and provide benefits for at least 45 million uninsured Americans and a program launch of that magnitude cannot be done without large scale technical strategic planning over a fairly long time period. I do not believe that either strategic planning has been adequate or sufficient time has been invested to ensure that his program is truly viable. President Obama is a man in a hurry and he has not allowed adequate time for implementation of a program of this magnitude. Most of the congressmen who voted for it have not even read it. And, I am certain that the Affordable Care Act is not really going to be affordable at all. We will be adding at least 45 million Americans plus many others who have not had insurance who will most likely have preconditions that they will be seeking immediate care for almost all at once across the nation thus overwhelming the

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*Corresponding Author
Fellow,
Royal Society for Public Health
Adjunct Professor of Public Health
Department of Health Promotion
and Disease Prevention
Robert Stempel College of Public
Health and Social Work
Florida International
University Miami, Florida, USA
Residence: Charlotte, North Carolina,
USA
Email: dr_popejoy@hotmail.com

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existing capital infrastructure of our health care delivery system. Both our taxes and our deficits are going to go way up to cover this huge investment in an untested health system. Will it even work? We are not so sure. We do not have enough doctors or nurses or technicians to handle that overflow. How long have the Brits had the National Health System and is it cost effective and satisfactory for everyone in Britain? I have read that the British NHS has a plethora of problems and not everyone is happy with the outcomes. Could any national health delivery system absorb an additional 45 million subscribers in such a short period of time?

I am not writing to defend all things American. We are flawed like everyone else. And, I like the Brits. I like English literature and British music and the food, pubs and pints of beer and I watch a lot of BBC America including Top Gear, Fiona and her Antiques Road show, MI5, Torchwood, and even Have You Been Served. I'm a Fellow in the Royal Society for Public Health. Maybe I was British in a previous life; possibly a Tory in colonial times. Yet, here I am today without the English accent living in America. So, I am not blasting the editors back with a long diatribe on international relations; but, just maybe a history lesson that could serve not only the UK well in better understanding America; but, other nations as well.

First of all, America can handle the criticism. We have lived with international bad press for over 200 years. However, when the British (as do other nations) criticize our political behavior, you understand the reality that the American version of federalism; and the checks and balances that were put in place by the unruly Americans of colonial times were established as a response to the UK's own King George. Personally, I never believed that any of King George's taxes and other laws that originated in London without representation from the colonies were all that egregious or unfair; he just lacked people skills in how he implemented them. In response, Americans wanted a system of government that was both messy and complex and would prevent a similar version of King George from being elected here. We have a purposefully designed an often adversarial relationship between our presidents and our

congress, and even an adversarial relationship between the two houses of congress with the Supreme Court waiting for the dust to settle before they step in and render a new law unconstitutional and everyone has to start over again. Even our presidents are not directly elected by a popular vote. We have an Electoral College that can, if they desire, elect whomever they want as president regardless of who gets the majority of popular votes. We can also impeach our president if he is really bad. Alexander Hamilton made it clear he never wanted to see a charismatic demagogue elected and that included Aaron Burr. Hamilton knew he himself could never run for president because he was not born in America. The jury is still out on President Obama; however, if it is proven that he was born in Kenya, what a constitutional crisis that would occur if that news breaks out. Of course, the American fourth estate, the press, is always on alert for political bad acts because the next available Pulitzer Prize has their name on it. In reality, when our politicians get into a pissing contest, most Americans just watch the news from the sidelines and go about their business. We can all do without the federal government for a brief spell; it's almost a relief. Indeed, government employees who are furloughed during the shutdown may complain bitterly about being sent home; but, secretly enjoy the unpaid vacation (and most of them would be back paid anyway when they returned). And, critical federal employees are exempt from the shutdown so apparently, the idea of a government shutdown endangering the American population is a bit over-played in the international media which is what a shutdown is intended to do—no real danger, but it makes headlines as the president and congress bicker over some issue and a bit of harmless brinkmanship is called for.

A government shut down never endangers national security or other critical services. You may not be able to go on a tour of the White House but both the Secret Service and the federal police force are all on duty. Public health is not the same as health care delivery such as a hospital emergency department. In fact, public health programs may be temporarily shut down but there is little or no direct risk to any seriously ill persons who need immediate medical



care. The brinkmanship of a government shutdown is more about show than substance so no one is damaged as a message is sent. The president and the speaker of the house are just two roosters ruffling their feathers and crowing at each other while the press writes their stories. Life goes on in America; I assure you.

My final point on describing political behavior – Great Britain has had its share of moments of indecision and argumentation. Two of the greatest leaders in world history of the 20th century were arguably Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher and maybe the addition of Tony Blair in distant third place. And, each of these leaders staged their own form of political circuses playing brinkmanship. Luckily for all of us, Churchill badgered FDR to getting us into World War II (along with the help of the Japanese) or America would today be a nuclear wasteland (the Nazis would have perfected the A-bomb, a multi-stage V2 rocket to carry it, and jet powered bombers capable of getting here from a defeated Britain). And, you all would be speaking German unless you were Jewish or Black and in that case, you would not be speaking at all given Hitler's plans for you.

In my view, Great Britain and America are probably the only two countries holding the world's door open to the light since I believe we are quite possibly on our way into a new Dark Ages and it may be our two countries that will hold on to a thin thread of civilization until a new Renaissance emerges, if it ever does. Yes, I would agree that there are other countries that are now emerging into a new economic world of modernism would certainly join the two major powers; certainly India (a rising modern nation); possibly Russia (who do not want to lose what they have gained), etc. So, we need to sleep tight all together each night to protect whatever is left of the world.