

The inconvenient truth about Trump – he's doing what he said he would

To the extent to which his record in office conforms to pre-electoral promises, Trump's record has been the best of any U.S. president since Calvin Coolidge

by Conrad Black



In *The Globe and Mail* last month, one Ian McGugan wrote a piece that was titled, very aptly but probably not in the way intended, “Dumb and Dumbest.” He quotes Simon Wren-Lewis, a quasi-Marxist economist and economic advisor to the British Labour Party (deep) shadow chancellor, John McDonnell, an authoritarian quasi-Marxist, and to his leader, the antediluvian, anti-Semitic national embarrassment Jeremy Corbyn. Other than as a former Oxford academic economist, McGugan did not introduce the source of the sage question that inspired his think-piece: “Why are we governed by

incompetents?" McGugan helpfully chimed in that in "a growing number of countries, the only qualification for high office appears to be a complete lack of qualifications." The next aperçu was inexorable: "The most glaring example of a dolt-in-chief is Donald Trump. He is averaging a dozen false or misleading claims a day, according to a tally compiled by the *Washington Post*."

The *Washington Post* abandoned that nonsensical claim to count the president's liberties with the truth 18 months ago, and it was counting every instance of Trump's casual hyperbole as if it were a direct violation of his Constitutional oath. In fact, by the ultimate litmus test of the integrity of holders of high political office, the extent to which his record in office conforms to pre-electoral promises, Trump's record has been the best of any U.S. president since Calvin Coolidge (1923-1929), who promised, and did, nothing, in the piping days of American isolationism, Prohibition and complete absence of requirements for collateral in borrowing to buy equities. (This was a bi-partisan policy trifecta that eventually gave us Al Capone, Hitler, the Great Depression and the Second World War.)

Trump promised prosperity, tax cuts, renegotiation of disadvantageous trade deals, the annihilation of ISIL, the establishment of a southern border that would control entry to the country, the shaping up of the military, revival of the concept of nuclear non-proliferation regarding Iran and North Korea, withdrawal from the inane and self-punitive Paris Climate accord, a resuscitation of education through non-unionized schools and incentives to the reintroduction of free speech in academia and the end of NATO's condition as a gang of defenceless freeloaders (such as Canada), generously accepting a military guaranty of their territory by the United States without paying for it.

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The fact that he has delivered wholly or partially on all of this is, to borrow a phrase from one of the great charlatans ever elected to U.S. national office, Al Gore, “an inconvenient truth” that the conventional media of the Western world have great difficulty acknowledging. The Canadian media would have to be scrutinized by a veritable Sherlock Holmes to unearth the facts that the United States now has 1.6 million more positions to be filled than unemployed people, that per capita GDP growth has tripled, the economic growth rate is more than three times that of the European Union, more than 50 per cent above the Obama record, and that working- and middle-class income and purchasing power are growing for the first time this millennium.

Never mind, Trump’s the dolt-in-chief, as the whole world knows. Of course he has a complete lack of qualifications for this position. The facts that he made billions of dollars putting up high-quality buildings, founded a television program that pulled in about 25 million viewers every week for a decade and a half, that he made an astounding comeback from insolvency, paying all his creditors, is the only person elected president of the U.S. never to have held any public office or military command, devised a pioneering strategy of branding, self-promotion, social media and talk-show support to become president – all of this merely proves his lack of qualifications to do anything. (His foray into the casino business was a junk-bond operation, where everyone knows the risk.)

Of course, his stature is pathetic and dwarfish except for the additional inconvenient truth about Trump – that he has achieved more prior to being inaugurated president than any of his 43 predecessors except three co-founders of the country, two victorious commanders of great armies in just wars, and the great distributor of war relief in Europe in and after the First World War, respectively Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Grant, Eisenhower and Hoover. But McGugan and Jeremy Corbyn’s

economic guru, Wren-Lewis, who may have inspired the current Labour Party's admiration of the Venezuelan economic miracle, acknowledge that Trump has competitors in "wind-baggery:" the British Brexit leaders Nigel Farage and Boris Johnson.

They "never really thought through what departing the European Union would mean in practice," and were unaware that there had been a border between Ulster and the Republic of Ireland. In fact, they started and led the successful Brexit campaign and never wavered in their views. Farage has been the most capable British party leader since Margaret Thatcher and Johnson has risen in 25 years from *Daily Telegraph* Brussels correspondent to editor of the *Spectator* (I appointed him to both positions, where he was very successful) to mayor of London, foreign secretary and now prime minister of the United Kingdom.

Even allowing for the incontestable Delphic exaltation of McGugan and Wren-Lewis, Europe is a socialistic house of cards. Economic co-operation and the end of intra-European war are splendid. But Brussels isn't answerable to the major EU powers or the ludicrous and powerless talking shop of a European Parliament. It isn't democratic and that is the main reason why Britain is leaving. Without Britain, the EU will become a Franco-German hegemonic zone continuing, for notorious historic reasons, to pay unsustainable quantities of danegeld to organized labour and the small farmers, and treading water economically. If it does not adopt a two-tier system – a common market for all and political integration only for the countries that wish it, the European Union will disintegrate. Whatever happens in the EU, Britain will sever its excessive intimacy, but not its good relations, with western Europe. The fear-mongering of Mark Carney and others will be exposed as unfounded. Trump said two years ago that "A strong and independent Britain is a blessing to the world." Johnson and Trump will strengthen the Anglosphere, the most positive force in world affairs for 200 years, and will in some respects revive the productive relations of Churchill and

Roosevelt and Thatcher and Reagan. With the rise of China, this could be the most important strategic development since the end of the Cold War.

Also in recent editions of *The Globe and Mail* were columns by Omar El Akkad and Samra Habib, predictably attacking Trump as a racist, inciter of violence and head of a vast movement of hate-filled people. He and his followers welcome a million legal immigrants a year; his government is allied with many Muslim countries, and most Americans support his view that those who seem to think little of their country are welcome to leave it. (Trump is, admittedly, a strange cat and not to everyone's taste including, sometimes, mine, but he is very accomplished.)

There are many competent democratic leaders apart from Trump and Johnson: Morrison (Australia), Salvini (Italy), Abe (Japan), Modi (India), Netanyahu (Israel), Merkel, though she has reached her sell-by date, (Germany), and possibly Macron (France), are among them. (If Corbyn and McDonnell last to the next British election, they will never be heard from again after that.) A greater problem than quality of political leadership is the almost unrelievedly banal groupthink and complacency of our Western media, as the *Globe* so helpfully reminds us. As Montreal's Irving Layton wrote of anti-Americanism in Canada 50 years ago: "Cowardice is wisdom; mediocrity, sanity; philistinism, Olympian serenity; and the spitefulness of the weak, moral indignation."

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