

# **HERMIT HERALD**

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### **QUOTE FOR THE DAY**

**“The more you know yourself, the more patience you have for what you see in others.”  
Erik Erikson, German-American psychologist**

### **MISINFORMATION REIGNS**

**Re the above quote, I think we all need to know ourselves better. The columnist, Max Fisher writes a fascinating article predicated on the work of Dr. Brendan Nyhan, a Dartmouth College political scientist. We all recognize there are some serious partisan and identity issues out there. Dr. Nyhan puts us all under a microscope and attempts to explain why we are the way we are.**

**“We are in an era of endemic misinformation and outright disinformation... The real drivers,**

**some experts believe, are social and psychological forces that make people prone to sharing and believing misinformation, and those forces are on the rise.”**

**“Exposure to good information does not reliably instill accurate beliefs. A growing body of evidence suggests that the ultimate culprits are, ‘cognitive and memory limitations, directional motivations to defend or support some group identity or existing belief, and messages from other people and political elites.’”**

**Dr. Nyhan clarifies, “People become more prone to misinformation when several things happen. First, and perhaps most important, is when conditions in society make people feel a greater need for what social scientists call, ‘ingrouping’ – a belief that their social identity is a source of strength and superiority, and that other groups can be blamed for their problems.”**

**“As much as we like to see ourselves as rational beings who put truth-seeking above all else, we are social animals wired for**

**survival. In times of perceived conflict or social change we seek security in groups, and that makes us eager to consume information, true or not, that lets us see the world as a conflict, putting our righteous ingroup against a nefarious outgroup.”**

**Dr. Nyhan goes on, “Framing everything as a grand conflict against scheming enemies can feel enormously reassuring, and that’s why, perhaps the greatest culprit of our era of misinformation may be, more than any one particular misinformer, the era-defining rise is social polarization. Growing hostility between the two halves of America feeds social distrust, which makes people more prone to rumor and falsehood. It also makes people cling much more tightly to their partisan identities. Once our brains switch to, ‘Identity-based conflict mode’, we become desperately hungry for information that will affirm that sense of us versus them, and much less concerned about things like truth and accuracy.”**

**So, under that psychoanalytical microscope, where do you – we – fit in?**

## **THE JOB QUALITY INDEX (JQI)**

**Some interesting statistics from a recent JQI update, reflecting on the need to increase the pay of hourly workers, as discussed in our last issue.**

**Worker pay is one of the most important factors at the heart of a slowly recovering labor market, acting in tandem, of course, with the fact that low hourly pay and high unemployment benefits do not offer incentives to rush back to the work force.**

**Here are some JQI statistics to contemplate: 55% of all hourly workers are in, “low quality jobs” (defined as weekly wages below the national average). Only 45% of hourly workers are in, “high quality jobs.”**

**Further, only 28% of Hispanics and 29% of blacks are in high quality jobs, while 61% of Asian Americans are in high quality jobs. I can't understand why the statistics are presented in this manner as they fail to highlight that 72% of Hispanics and 71% of blacks are in low quality, hourly paid jobs. Something has to change here, and soon. Your**

**Big Mac, coke and fries are going from \$5.99 to \$6.99. We can, and must, afford it.**

## **A FASCINATING LIFE**

**A recent obituary caught my eye, recounting the life of Peter Warner, an incredible seaman who drowned at the age of ninety, having been washed overboard by a rogue wave.**

**Peter was born in 1931 to Arthur George Warner and Ethel (Wakefield) Warner. Peter's father was one of the wealthiest men in Australia having built a manufacturing and media empire. The father fully expected Peter to go into the family business.**

**Peter's interests were elsewhere, primarily boxing and sailing. At age 17 he ran away from home and joined a ship's crew. A year later, when he returned, he was forced to go to law school at the University of Melbourne. That only lasted six weeks until he ran away again, this time to sail on Swedish and Norwegian ships for three years. He learned Swedish very quickly and passed the Master Mariner's Exam**

**allowing him to captain even the largest seagoing vessels.**

**He eventually did return to the family business, but his heart remained at sea. He won the annual Sydney to Hobart race three times and, in 1963 placed fourth in the 2,225 mile race between California and Hawaii.**

**By 1965 he had moved into commercial fishing and had bought several crayfish boats, which he operated around Tasmania. Those fishing grounds were over fished, which took him further east to Tonga where he was refused permission to fish in the country's waters. But, it was in those same waters, in 1966, that the defining moment in his life occurred.**

**While sailing near an uninhabited island, 'Ata, looking through his binoculars he spotted a burned patch of ground. Curious, he pulled closer to the island when a naked teenage boy came running into the water, frantically waving at him; five more quickly followed.**

**Flashing back; fifteen months earlier, the boys, 13 to 16 had all been students at a Tongan**

**boarding school. They thought it would be fun to “borrow” a neighbor’s 24 foot boat for a maritime joy ride. Not so much fun it turned out, as a fierce wind came up and broke their sail and rudder causing them to float helplessly with the currents for eight days before, luckily, winding up on the shore of ‘ata. Now the reader is thinking this sounds like, William Golding’s novel, “The Lord of the Flies” , “A novel about a group of boys stranded on an island who descend into murderous anarchy.” In fact, it was anything but.**

**Back in Tonga, the search had gone on for the boys for many weeks when, in sadness and frustration, the search had been discontinued, the boys presumed dead and funerals/ memorial services had been held.**

**In the meantime, on ‘Ata, the boys initially lived off of bird eggs, raw fish and coconuts. What they didn’t know was that ‘Ata had at one time been occupied by about 350 people. In 1863 a British slave trader captured about 150 of them and the Tongan king relocated the rest of them to a larger island where they would be safer. Can’t say why it took so long, but the**

**boys discovered the ruins of a village about three months after they arrived. Amid the rubble they discovered a machete, domesticated taro plants and a flock of chickens descended from ones left behind by the previous inhabitants.**

**With great difficulty they were able to start a fire which was kept burning the entire time they were on 'Ata. The self-discipline these boys lived by was extraordinary. "They built a makeshift settlement with a thatched-roof hut, a garden and an open air gymnasium complete with a bench press (imagine rocks rather than bar bells). One of the boys fashioned a guitar with debris from the boat and they began and ended every day with songs and prayer."**

**"They established a strict duty roster, rotating among resting, gathering food and watching for ships. If a fight broke out, the antagonists had to walk to opposite ends of the island and return, ideally having cooled off. When one of the boys broke his leg, the others fashioned a splint; his leg healed perfectly." A lesson better learned from this story than from, "The Lord of the Flies."**



**Peter had radioed news of the boy's discovery back to Tonga and the entire nation, especially the families, were deliriously happy. The Tongan king decided Peter Warner could fish in Tongan waters after all. The one unhappy party was the owner of the boat that had been commandeered, but he joined the happy ranks as Peter compensated him for his loss.**

**Peter also became an acclaimed celebrity in Australia. After the rescue, Peter, his wife and daughter moved to Tonga where they lived for thirty years before returning to Australia where he died. He became like a second father to the boys and all six of them worked as his crew members. He wrote three books of memoirs about his life and was accused by some of trying to win fame off of the story. He said in 1974, "I'd rather fight mother nature than human beings."**

**As the famous radio broadcaster, Paul Harvey, would say, "And now you know the rest of the Story."**

**Your faithful scribe, PB**

