

# Maybe we could just lighten up a little bit?

Lifelong pessimist DICK LUMSDEN breaks ranks with a call to end the torrent of bad news

**T**he end of the world is coming... apparently. And I don't mean the ancient Mayan prediction that while the Christmas parties are in full swing in 2012 we will reach the end of the "fifth age of man" and all but a few survivors across the globe will be wiped out in some - as yet - unspecified disaster.

No, I'm talking about the destructive global media conspiracy which seems hell bent on ramming as much bad news down our throats as it can find, 24 hours a day, every day.

We're heading for financial oblivion, Sir David Attenborough has penned his obituary for our polar ice caps; wars are raging on almost every continent; *X-Factor* viewing figures have plunged.

It's all so bad even Silvio Berlusconi has jumped ship... but I bet he's planning a hell of a leaving party!

What is going on? What have we done to deserve such an unending, depressing, scaremongering torrent of bad news?

My wife has long held the view that I have more than a touch of the Victor Meldrew in me... bit of a half-empty rather than a half-full perspective on life.

If that's true, I'd hate to hang out with some of the editors and producers dishing up our news. They must be either really depressed or really sadistic.

Sure things are bad, but I refuse to believe there is absolutely no light at the end of the tunnel.

At the end of the Second World War Britain was all but bankrupt and we had to go cap in hand to America and borrow £1 billion - and we only finished paying it off in 2006. I'm sure at the time it seemed like we were all doomed... but we turned out all right... kind of.

I'm with Franklin D Roosevelt here. When he was

elected in the middle of the Great Depression, he said in his inaugural address: "The only thing we have to fear is fear itself..." And that is what we need to bear in mind when we listen to the news.

People who should know better throw big numbers around and create an atmosphere of fear, telling us how serious everything has become. They need to lighten up!

I mean, how can anyone actually measure a trillion? If you were to sit down with a box of pencils and a lot of paper, and it if took you a second to write each consecutive number, it would take you more than 31,000 years to write from 1 to 1,000,000,000,000.

That's the kind of fact I want to hear when the charts come out on screen.

Or how about this one... if you took a trillion pound coins and laid them end to end around and around the 11,000 miles of Britain's coastline, it would create a money wall almost four metres high.

That would sort out immigration at a stroke.

Well maybe not at a stroke, as it would probably take 158,000 people a full year to lay them all down, working round the clock and not stopping to sleep, eat or watch a soap opera.

This fondness for bad news is a relatively new thing.

Around 40 years BI (Before Internet) newspapers reported things like "Lady Astor wears new hat", or "Successful atom bomb test in South Pacific". There was always a positive spin.

Even when *News at Ten* started, Sir Trevor Macdonald could always flash us a cheeky grin at 10.28 and give us an "...and finally..." sending us off to bed chuckling.

But by the time Martyn Lewis was delivering us the news in 1993, the die was already cast.

His campaign for good news stories was laughed out of court and it's been downhill ever since.

Now we have wall to wall misery on our rolling 24 hour news channels, each one

trying to be first with the bad news.

On the internet we have cyber bullying, identity theft, paedophiles searching for victims and even the weather websites are depressing.

Even when there is a chance to lift the gloom it seems they can't let it lie.

How gutted must the Duchess of Cambridge have been to see worldwide coverage of her sister's backside and her husband's bald spot upstaging her big day?

Come on....give us all a laugh. Why can't we balance up reports of the Greek debt crisis with a good news story from Porsche about the fact that they've sold more cars per head in the northern city of Larissa than they have in New York or London. True.

Why can't we be told the upside of Italy being balanced on a financial tightrope is that it has freed up Berlusconi to write an album of love songs which is being released on CD in time for the Christmas market? True.

2012 is an Olympic year. Let's make an Olympian effort to cheer ourselves up with some good news, but if it all falls apart look on the bright side; with the end of the world predicted to happen on December 23 at least we won't need to buy any Christmas presents.

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**If you have any views on this article, or are over 50 and would like to take part occasionally in some gentle consumer research, please contact him on [dlumsden@owlms.com](mailto:dlumsden@owlms.com)**

