

 **TODAY'S "SHORT TOPIC"**  
**FACTS MATTER!**  
**(To some folks,  
anyway!)**

By Stephen L. Bakke  May 31, 2015



*Here's what provoked me:*

*A full-fledged "Commentary" article made some major mistakes by offering demonstrably false claims about how wonderful Europe is compared to the United States. I almost spit out my coffee while reading the end of this article*

*Here's my response:*

**Facts Matter! (To some folks, anyway!)**

Martin Harris was given the unique opportunity to offer his opinion in "Commentary" on May 30 ("US defense spending is excessive, misguided"). And he does just fine because he's entitled to his honest opinion. When he started to spout some facts about Europe, however, his armor started to crack. A reader, looking for an expert's opinion to dependably rely on, should evaluate how dependable that expert is by checking out a few "facts."

Harris stated: "Our friends in Central Europe and the North Atlantic countries ..... have (various wonderful things and) ..... mostly full employment." I was living with his honest opinions until that declaration.

I said to myself: "I'd better go back and review the facts, because that's NOT quite how I remember it." In fact, France, Greece, Italy, Ireland, Finland, Belgium, Netherlands, Canada and Sweden have unemployment rates ranging from almost 7% to almost 26%. The average rate for those countries is 11%. Countries which arguably compare well with the U.S. are UK, Germany, Denmark, Norway, and Switzerland.

Our economy needs improvement, Mr. Harris, but we still outshine most of the industrialized world. NOBODY is at "mostly full employment." Check your facts and tone down your claims!