For goodness' sake, give us something to laugh about

Drowning in a tide of bad news, **DICK LUMSDEN** pines for the days when the long summer holidays gave us some weird and wonderful news

years ago now, when
we journalists had a
high old time in
August.
With most people on
holiday, including the criminals
and the MPs (best not get them
mixed up) there was generally not
a lot of real news around...so we
had a thing called the "silly

here was a time, a few

National newspapers would "rescue" donkeys from Spanish beaches, or we'd swoon over pictures of rude shaped vegetables.

But alas, all that kind of tomfoolery seems to have been consigned to the dustbin of history.

Now, with 24-hour rolling news channels, the internet, and global hysteria, the bad news just keeps on coming.

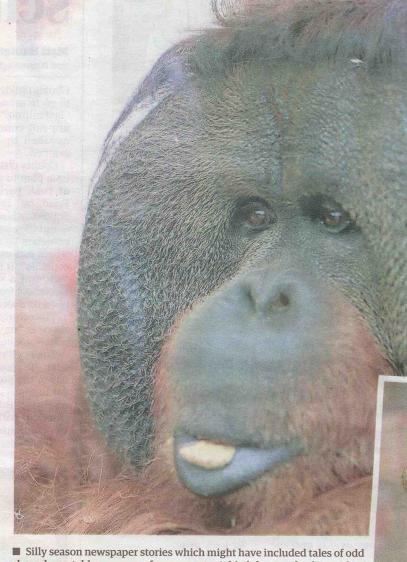
War, disease, terrorism, celebrity paedophiles, floods and fires...we've had them all in the last few weeks and there seems to be no end to it

I switched on the TV news the other day and I had a real déjà vu moment. Some of you reading this may be old enough to remember a TV movie in the 1980s called The Day After.

This disaster movie chronicles the build up to a nuclear war, and a large part of the action features TV news reports about Russian military muscle flexing, and posturing between the governments in the east and west. Ring any bells?

I don't know if there are genuinely more bad things happening in the world now than there used to be...or if we just get told about them more often and in more depth. But either way, watching the news this August is a lot more depressing than feeling sorry for a mistreated donkey on the Costa del Sol.

Nothing that you or I can say or do will change things of course, so I propose to stop worrying about whether or not someone landing at Heathrow from Nigeria sneezes as they get on a Tube carriage about half an hour before I get on it to head back to Liverpool Street. The latest



Silly season newspaper stories which might have included tales of odd shaped vegetables or news of an orangutan's birthday, used to be staple summer fare.
Pictures: WENDY TURNER, GEOFF ROBINSO

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Syria or a dozen other places. But I figure I have about as little chance of catching it as I have of winning the lottery – and I don't even play the lottery. There is another hidden effect of so much bad news on TV. International charities are seeing an overall drop in their donations, because there are now just so many humanitarian causes to support that people are either becoming immune to the pleas. Or just can't decide where to donate and consequently don't bother.

So it falls to international
Governments to increase their

around 0.7% of our total income each year – mostly to

Russia on the other hand, with an income almost 30% larger than the UK, gives out just 0.03% in aid – and that most likely goes in the form of rocket launchers.

I don't often feel sorry for politicians. Well, to be more accurate, I never feel sorry for politicians, but would you like to be in some of their shoes right now? Tiptoeing over eggshells, careful in what you say. You can't condemn a rogue government too much because last week British companies were selling them weapons, and next week we'll be buying their oil.

In a global economy, like it or not, very often the ordinary man in an ordinary street, indirectly depends on fragile diplomacy to keep their ordinary life on track. That small industrial unit at the bottom of your street, with its local workforce and paying its programmes. You just never know what is round the corner – metaphorically or physically.

So, I'm making a plea to all of our national newspapers and TV stations. We still have three weeks left in August.

For the sake of all our sanity, get out there and rescue a donkey or start a campaign to find the country's rudest vegetable... anything to give us a damn good laugh for a change.

You know it makes sense!

■ Dick Lumsden is Managing Director of Owl Marketing Solutions, a specialist in marketing and advertising to older consumers. If you have any views on this article, or are over 50 and would like to take part