

CBC should wish for better statistics

TO CELEBRATE CANADA'S 140TH BIRTHDAY, CBC News has decided to use the popular social networking site Facebook to gauge what Canadians want for their country's future. And according to their group, the Great Canadian Wish List, abolishing abortion is currently Canada's number-one priority.

On the poll's Facebook group page, CBC explains that the top wishes will be based on the number of supporters who join a particular wish's group, and will later be featured in a Canada Day special.

Maybe the CBC figured maple leafs, fireworks, and parades were going to run away with it; either way it's hard to believe that they honestly plan on coming out and announcing the "winners" of an illegitimate opinion poll run through a Facebook group. Especially given that for the past few days, the top wishes by the membership have been "Abolish Abortion in Canada," followed by a wish group calling for "a spiritual revival in our nation." These results hold absolutely no significance whatsoever.

Any self-respecting CBC journalist should view the creation of this entire project as an enormous embarrassment. If you read through the discussion threads, it becomes evident that this project is being exploited by large church groups who've organized themselves accross the country.

Now, in response to this overwhelming "support," an "I wish that Canada would remain pro-choice" wish group is in third place—not because its members view this as the most important wish for Canada's future, but because they don't want the anti-abortion group's ideology to win.

I'm not criticizing the concept of using Facebook to reach the youth demographic—in fact, it hurts me to admit that Facebook has probably become the single most efficient way to reach high-school and university-aged Canadians. But when did Facebook become a credible journalistic source?

It seems like CBC just figured getting the kids' ideas off of the Intertubes would be a hype idea. But as far as I'm concerned, polling people via a social network is less statistically credible than citing facts found on Wikipedia for an essay. I thought *MacLean's* magazine was guilty of questionable statistical practices with their infamous university rankings issue, but this latest project takes the 140th birthday cake.

The CBC could have paid some poor intern \$8 per hour to talk to random people on the streets, and it would've been a more credible way to compose a Canadian wish list—at least then there would be a way to know if the people who are being polled were even Canadian. As it stands, there's currently nothing preventing non-Canadians from voting in this survey.

When you look at most public opinion polls, there has to be a margin of error listed and some explanation of where the source data came from. But with this, there's no way of knowing who these people are.

It used to be that Facebook was a social network reserved exclusively for postsecondary students, but now it's open to anyone and everyone over the age of 13. All you need is an email to sign up for Facebook—individuals can even hold multiple accounts. And while there's no way of reading through the list of names of a group's members, I wouldn't be surprised if many of those pro-lifers hail from bible-belt USA.

The majority of young Canadians probably don't want abortions made illegal, but this statistically invalid "source" would suggest otherwise. Instead, a polling idea of what could've been an interesting glance at what Canadians want has ended up becoming a complete joke.

"Normally when you make a wish, you keep it secret. This Canada Day, CBC wants you to shout it out," the media organization says on their Frequently Asked Questions page. But hasn't anyone told the CBC that if you say a birthday wish out loud it doesn't come true?

At least now I won't be surprised if Ben Mulroney comes out on Canada Day with a Facebook-inspired report profiling Canadians who want to save the country's fetuses.

NATALIE CLIMENHAGA
Senior News Editor



JASKARAN SINGH

LETTERS FROM THE ARCHIVES

Being a donkey doesn't excuse being a jackass

I was kicked by a donkey in the Engineering building. Since when has the University allowed asses to become Engineers? If the admissions standards are lowered much further, it will not be too long before jackasses will be getting plumber's certificates.

AWFUL SORE
7 January, 1954

Eat too much, Brutus?

I noticed in your last issue a picture and story on the Kappa Sigma mascot, Brutus, who died following the cross-country race. I think this is appalling.

I can imagine what the dog's diet consisted of since he was living in a fraternity house. What those boys don't realize is that dogs, like humans, require vitamins and minerals to maintain their health.

Your story mentioned that the SPCA might investigate this. I sincerely hope that they do and that the administration will forbid these social organizations from having pets again.

It should be obvious that these animals are mistreated, and treatment of this sort will only result in early death for the animal.

AL FRANKLIN
20 October, 1961

The lighter side of racism

I wish to comment on the editorial in Friday's *Gateway* regarding "A brand of humour."

While essentially agreeing with the editor in that all racial "jokes" are in very poor taste, may I offer a few suggestions as to why jokes of this nature are being circulated throughout the city.

I do not believe that native-born Edmontonians (and Canadians for that matter) particularly want to see Canada turned into a Little Ukraine, Little Poland, or Little America.

I don't deny the fact that all immigrants are entitled to a new life in Canada, but when one can travel three blocks downtown and not hear a word of English spoken save his own senseless muttering, one can't help wondering if they're out to get us.

Through the settling haze of garlic, I can just barely make out a country called Canada where the cereal boxes are printed in Ukrainian, and then in English.

I believe that the few remaining nationalists of this country are somewhat disturbed to see a New World emerging in which not only [is] English not known, but [neither are] these creatures called Canadians.

I don't believe that it's expecting too much to want to hear the language of one's own country spoken, however haltingly, wherever one goes.

I say let's keep the cultures confined to the Ukrainian Centres, Polish Halls, and Scandinavian Centres.

PETE PORTLOCK
19 December, 1965

Blowing white smoke at Student Union elections

As the University student elections are coming back I feel a need to knock the bureaucratic system of the University, I hereby announce my candidacy for the Pope of the University of Alberta.

I feel [that] I'm qualified for this position because of the following reasons:

- 1) I always have felt that I've been infallible
- 2) I'm a Protestant
- 3) I'll make Peter Laugheed a saint if he cuts off Ontario oil supplies

I'll become a hard-line pope and represent the interests of the University population.

I urge the student body to write my name on the President's ballot, and cross out the word President and write in pope.

CHARLES CATT
6 February, 1975

Saskatchewan's potash to fund zeppelin army

While I was visiting my hometown of Greenfield, SK, on the weekend, I was talking to Bert in the Link Hardware store, and he had a very interesting idea as to why Alan Blakeney took over the potash mines in that province.

It seems that the money the province obtains from the sale of potash will go towards the purchase of New Yorkers—specifically, 2 million residents of Manhattan and the Bronx.

The money New York receives from this sale will go towards the

purchase of 300 dirigibles, which will be floated over Washington, flashing obscene language over the White House.

Saskatchewan will reap great benefits from their end of the deal in that they'll have more people than Alberta, and will get over their severe inferiority complex.

Future plans also call for the purchase of 15 Rocky Mountains, three blocks of downtown Calgary, and an acre of tar sand. This will make Saskatchewan so closely resemble Alberta that no one will be able to tell the difference, and they'll become the new blue-eyed sheiks of Canada.

ALICE CHALMERS
18 November, 1975

Letters from the Archives is a semi-regular feature where the Gateway runs historical letters that we feel are of particular importance—or are just really hilarious.

Letters to the editor should be dropped off at room 3-04 of the Students' Union Building or e-mailed to letters@gateway.ualberta.ca.

The Gateway reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity, and to refuse publication of any letter it deems racist, sexist, libellous or otherwise hateful in nature. The Gateway also reserves the right to publish letters online.

Letters to the editor should be no longer than 350 words, and should include the author's name, program, year of study and student identification number to be considered for publication.