

OPINION

opinion@gateway.ualberta.ca • tuesday, 5 february, 2008

Everything super in America today

BY ALL ACCOUNTS, AMERICA IS HAVING A SUPER week. It started on Sunday, with the decadent spectacle of American grandeur that is the Super Bowl being played out in the middle of the desert. Highlights included a half-time show by a crusty classic-rock veteran and the shattering of the Patriots' 18–0 record by the underdog Giants. Everything, it seemed, was in brazen defiance of sense and sustainability.

But the final score is hardly what matters. The game itself is a side-show, an hour-long distraction meant to break up the otherwise never-ending parade of speculation, analysis, advertisement, and just plain filler. It's the promise of a game, starting with the 9am pre-game show and ending in the late hours of the evening—or whenever viewers decided to turn it off along the way. Indeed, it was a matter of sheer mathematical probability that those hoping to catch a 60-minute match would miss it if they blinked, or at least peeled themselves away from the million-dollar commercials long enough to load up on chicken wings. Even the advertised 4:30pm start time is unreliable, with the actual kickoff happening somewhere around 4:52pm—but such minutiae becomes relatively meaningless when you've been waiting for almost eight hours already.

Similarly, when the water-cooler chat on Monday mornings across America inevitably came down to whether people had “seen the game,” much more was at stake than the outcome of the match itself. The real question was, did you partake in the spectacle? Are you one of us? To not watch is to be un-American, un-patriotic, whether you cheer for the Patriots or not.

But by today, America's thoughts will have turned to Super Tuesday, arguably the more important and sophisticated of the spectacles currently being played out on America's centre stage. Only this time, it's not in one city; it's in as many as the candidates can hit in one day—if not in person, then with some cleverly placed halftime ads of their own. Expensive, but well worth it, as any marketer (or campaign manager) can tell you.

The stakes are even higher on Super Tuesday because, upset or not, the winner will claim bragging rights for four years, not just one. Only this time, the roles are reversed: the players are the spectators, and those whose patriotism is being called into question are the politicians. “Will you eat this hot dog?” “Will you kiss my baby?” “Will you save America?” These are the hard questions being asked of the candidates, and the one who answers the best—or at least the most—will emerge victorious.

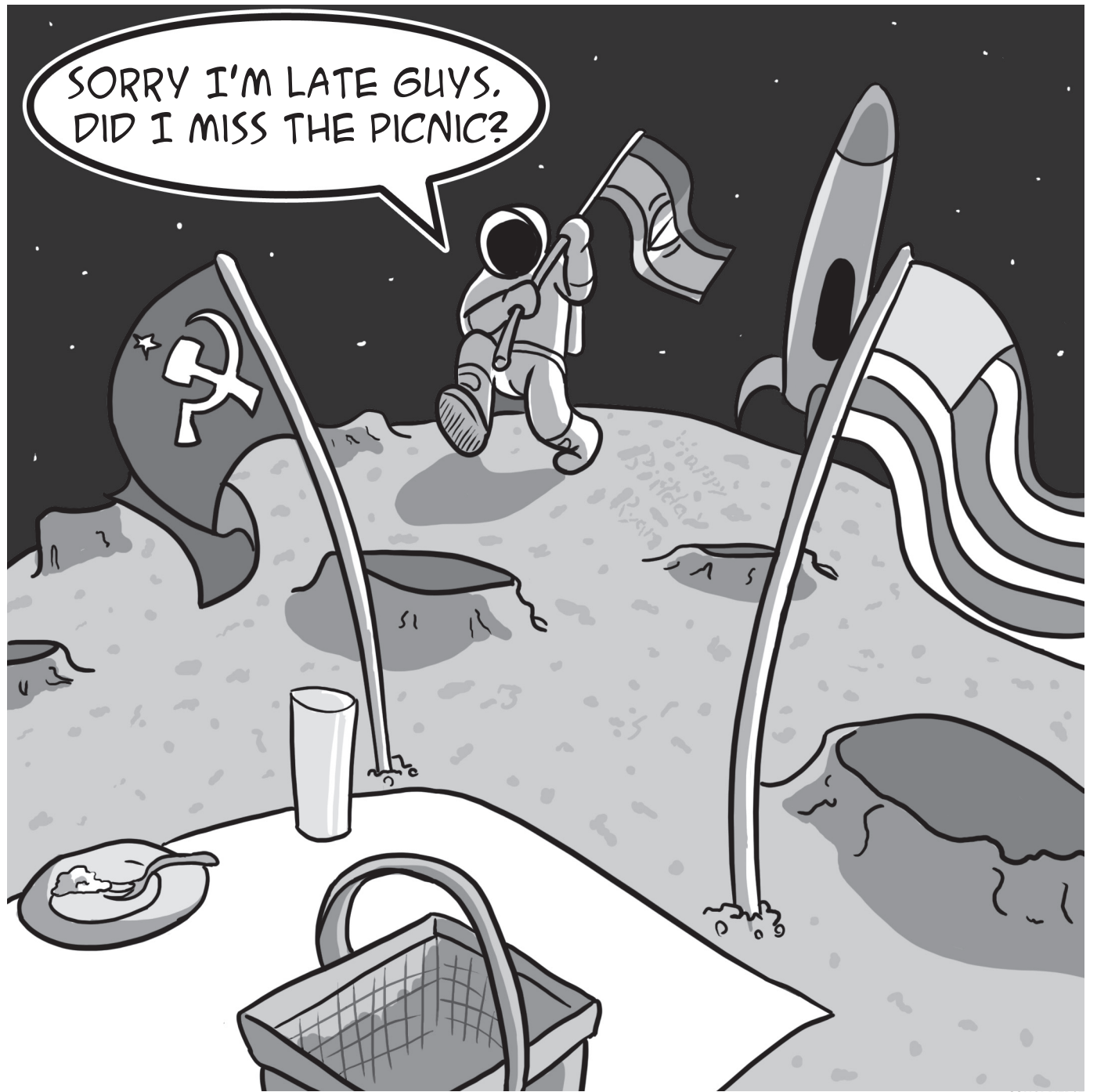
This spectacle of democracy is even longer and more drawn-out than the Big Game. A needlessly convoluted process that gives voters the illusion of choice and due political process, Super Tuesday is just a part—albeit the biggest one—of the presidential primaries, which means that even when today's big game finally comes to an end, no clear victor will have emerged.

Regardless of the score, there's no end in sight: after the primaries, the presidential race will begin in earnest, and almost in spite of the months of trash-talking and press coverage that will ensue, America won't get itself a new leader until November. And even then, no matter who becomes the next president—be it a black man, a white woman, a septuagenarian POW veteran, or a smooth-talking Mormon missionary—there's still no guarantee that the game will be played any differently.

As of yet, there's no name for this political spectacle as a whole; perhaps, if by some miracle it were contained in a single month, a witty moniker like Super November would emerge. More likely, however, it will only continue to expand like so many waistlines across America, as the spectators of democracy look on in confusion, stuffing themselves to their hearts' content with ballots, beer, and chicken wings and cheering on their favourite players.

As for me, I think I'll stick to the Super Bowl, despite its obvious flaws—at least then I'll be able to understand the rules, and I won't have to care about the outcome.

ADAM GAUMONT
Editor-in-Chief



CONAL PIERSE

LETTERS

Forget your revisionist history—PAC was a POS

This letter is in response to Eric Kerkhoven's letter of 29 January in which he squarely places the blame on students and their rejection of the 2006 Physical Activities Complex (PAC) referendum for the poor quality and congestion of the Van Vliet Fitness Centre (re: “Students also at fault for poor state of gyms”). Alas, it seems that he's dabbling in revisionist history.

Given that Mr Kerkhoven serves as Chair of the Recreation Action Committee (RAC), it is easy to see that he has put on blinders to the fact that the PAC proposal was a rotten deal for students. That's only natural given that Mr Kerkhoven's predecessors with RAC were responsible for it.

Students were being asked to vote on a building whose plans had yet to be finalized, foot the majority of costs with essentially no say on how the building would have been operated, and faced great uncertainty over when (and if) the student fee would be eliminated. Given all of these (and other issues) with the PAC proposal, it is easy to see why students voted it down.

If students really desire a modern new fitness and recreation centre, as Mr Kerkhoven seems to be arguing, they should be taking the lead on it through the Students' Union. There are at least three buildings on campus that exist because students banded together

and decided they needed better or more space and services. Getting the SU to take on and lead this kind of project will ensure that students get the best deal possible. Not the vague promises and empty vision that the PAC proposal promised.

J ROSS PRUSAKOWSKI
Just can't let go

Pro-life advertisement leaves a bitter taste

I'm writing this in response to the piece of paper taped to the back of my bathroom stall on 28 January. Normally, I'm immune and uncaring to the various forms of propaganda and advertising that grace bathroom walls; however, I was rather incensed at the sight of this particular piece of paper, which was an advertisement for the U of A Pro-Life organization (or so the stamp on the paper reads at the bottom).

First, I would like to say that I have no personal issue with this organization—everyone has the right to their own beliefs and I do not begrudge them that. I do, however, take issue with the “facts” that they were promoting.

The paper states: “Jan. 28. On this day in 1988, the Supreme Court of Canada struck down the federal legislation restricting abortion. Since then, the number of abortions has drastically increased. Today in Canada, there are approximately 100,000 abortions per year (Statistics Canada). Today, we remember and mourn the victims of abortion, past and present.”

I would have much rather have seen a poster advertising an open house or group meeting to discuss the convictions of the pro-life organization. But to do it in this way does a disservice to those that truly believe for rational reasons that abortion is not the only option.

Though I may be pro-choice, I still heartily believe in options, which is exactly what the Supreme Court ruling was about. By not having legislation on abortion, it gives us choice.

This was a poor showing of getting a message out, an it speaks of bitterness and spite. You should seek to educate people on why abortion isn't the answer and how pro-life is preferable, not to enrage people by the injustice of it all. You only end up pissing people off and reinforcing their determination to stay out of the argument and ignore it.

JENNIFER JONES
Arts IV

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The Gateway reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity, and to refuse publication of any letter it deems racist, sexist, libelous, 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.

Can you eat butter? Let us know.

LETTERS FROM THE ARCHIVES

Gateway ads offensive

I was saddened to read in the 30 January *Gateway* the full-page advertisement for prophylactics.

That the view of morality as “old-fashioned inhibition” has pervaded our culture is all too apparent. This view is unfortunate because morality is timeless—it's based on laws of human nature and relationships that can never change. One of these laws is that sexual contact other than in a marital relationship robs such a relationship of the special intimacy that is possible only if both partners have reserved sexual contact for each other. As a result, sex loses much of its meaning outside a marriage. The indulgent attitude portrayed in this advertisement is but another of the mistakes of the “play-now, pay-later” society we live in.

I hope that the *Gateway* will respect the wishes of those students on this campus who don't wish to see this type of advertising in their student newspaper.

ROSS SMILLIE
13 February, 1979

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.