

# THE BRUNSWICKAN OPINION & EDITORIAL

## Editorial

### The highs and lows of the Throne Speech

While there were no huge surprises in Monday's Speech from the Throne, there were two big ticket items: marijuana and the military.

They weren't connected, of course, and while one suggested getting high, the other suggested a low priority.

That's right. Unlike the United States (which bolstered its defense spending by another \$37 billion in July, bringing the total to \$355 billion for the year), the military received only one scant mention in Chretien's final Throne Speech.

Promising to "set out a long-term direction on international defense policy that reflects our values and interests and ensures that Canada's military is equipped to fulfill the demands placed upon it," the speech also mentioned working with the US to address our shared security needs.

With all the war rhetoric going around, it's refreshing to see that neither Iraq nor the "War on Terror" were mentioned in Canada's strategy for the future. With the United States bent on controlling the Middle East at all costs, Canada's finally trying to inch out from its big brother's shadow.

Sure, our military's awful. It's under-equipped, under-funded, and gets little respect. Remember when our soldiers showed up in Afghanistan wearing forest-green outfits? But really - we're not a conquering, imperialistic nation (unlike some others to the south), and don't need a massive military force to send out into the world. For deciding to use money on social programs rather than war the government should be lauded.

On the opposite end of the spectrum

is the increased possibility of marijuana decriminalization. A popular topic since a Senate committee recommended the complete legalization of the drug a few weeks ago, the Throne Speech suggested the government would act on the recommendation soon.

Decriminalization would end jail terms, heavy fines and criminal records for simple possession of marijuana, replacing them with a minor sanction similar to a traffic ticket. Obviously the public is behind the move, as *The Globe and Mail* reports that seven in 10 Canadians favour decriminalization.

Sure, it's no guarantee, but the promise to look into it for "the Canada we want," is encouraging. We're certainly not rushing, but at least we're heading in the right direction.

Other than that, this is the closest the Liberal government is going to get to an activist agenda. Most spending is going toward social programs: better health care, doubling our development assistance with a great deal going to aid in Africa, improving education for Aboriginal children, ratifying the Kyoto Accord, creating new national parks, facilitating the transition to Canada for new immigrants, and increasing bilingualism, among other things. It's obvious Chretien wants to leave on a high note.

Empty promises? Probably, but at least the government has shown some sensible, individual thinking on the marijuana and defense fronts. Let's be proud we're not following in America's footsteps when dealing with these two issues.

## Mugwump

### Political Fear Factor proves to be a hit

by Ben Conoley  
Managing Editor

I don't know if any of you had time to catch it this week, but there was a very special episode of FOX's *Fear Factor* on television. The celebrity edition brought together, for the first time in game show history, Jean Chretien, George W Bush, and Stephen Harper. I wasn't really too sure what to expect, but it proved to be quite an informative evening.

The first event of the show was a physical challenge. The participants had 30 minutes to storm Iraq and personally assassinate Saddam Hussein. A random draw of names selected Bush to go in first. As the president donned his cowboy hat and stepped into his vehicle of choice, a jet, he muttered a few words to the camera. "Well, United States policy says that we're not really allowed to assassinate foreign leaders, but don't worry, I got a plan, this guy's got to go. YEEEE HAAAWWWWW!" As cameras followed the president to Iraq, things took quite an unexpected turn.

Jean Chretien was giving his pre-mission speech. "We, the people of Canada, will not get involved in this war, unless it is backed 100% by the United Nations. It is clear, that President Bush has gotten way too much excited about war." Suddenly there was a ring on the Prime Minister's cell phone.

"Hello...Ah Mr. Bush...Well, I was just saying that we didn't want to get involved...Ah, I see...Well, since you put it that way...You're right, assassination is cheaper than war...Oh, you can't?...Where is it? Under your bed?...Ok, I'll be right there."

Chretien turned back to the camera. "Nevermind. We the people of Canada have decided to pledge as much support as we can into a US led war in Iraq. No questions please. Now can I have a big gun? I will assassinate Saddam myself." Chretien turned to enter the only vehicle available, an old decrepit helicopter. As he tried to start it nothing happened, so he huffed and got out to walk. The camera cut to Mr. Harper as Jean faded into the distance.

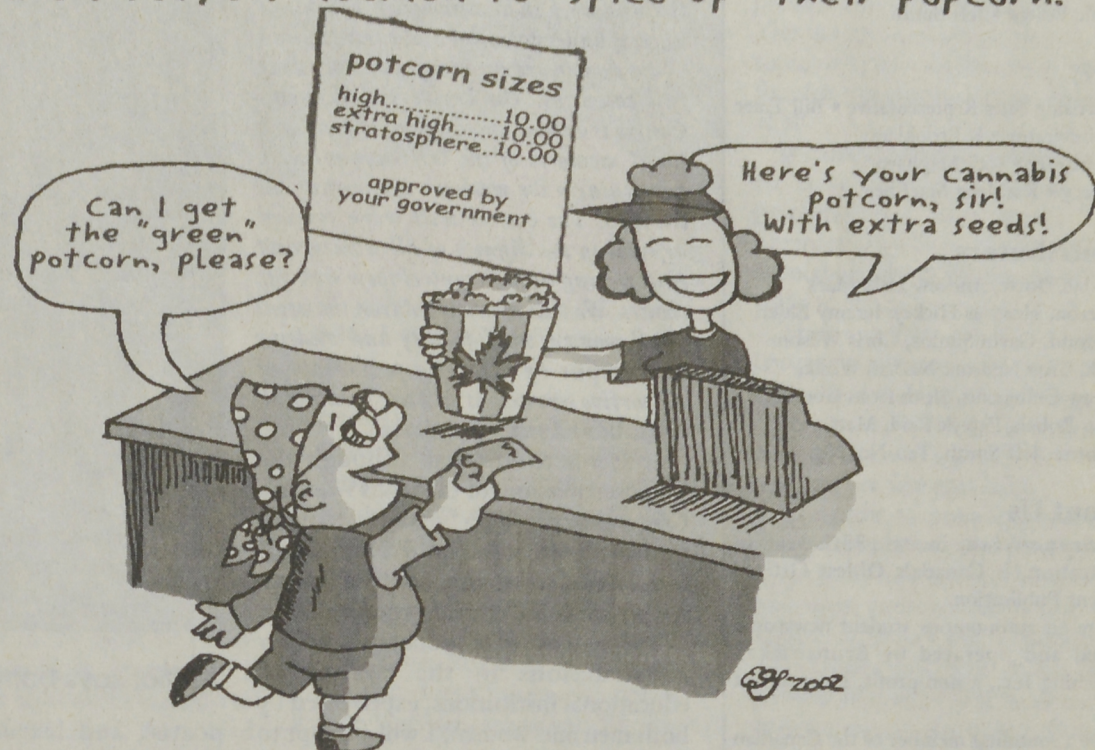
When Harper's turn rolled around, he just sort of stood there. It was kind of funny. He did talk though. "Well, maybe if the Liberal government would pledge more money into our armed forces rather than pledging to spend more on useless, rewardless things like Native assistance, education, and marijuana legalization I'd have a way to get there, to get Saddam myself. Also, we should unite the right."

No one got Saddam after all. It turns out Bush got confused as to where he was, complaining that "all these Middle-Eastern countries look the same," and

(SEE FEAR FACTOR, PAGE 6)

## COMING SOON TO A THEATRE NEAR YOU:

After the Canadian Government legalized marijuana, famous Players decided to "spice up" their popcorn.



Analysts found that sales shot up as customers still seemed hungry after purchase.

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Response to 'tango'

This is in response to the letter by "unknown author" in the Sept. 27 issue of *The Brunswickan*.

First of all, the assertion that "...victims of all the tragedies of the world have been honored and remembered" is of course a blatant falsehood. There has been not one serious and heartfelt "honoring" of the dead civilians in Afghanistan, although they outnumber the dead of the WTC and are in every single sense just as innocent; to say nothing of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, hundreds of thousands of East Timorese, and innumerable Guatemalans, Nicaraguans, and Vietnamese. The list, of course, goes on forever - all victims, at least in part, of Western intervention or aggression. The US is not the only guilty party here, but they are a guilty party nonetheless.

We are informed that "the Americans have never been allowed to forget the tragedy of Hiroshima..."

Oh. I think we can ignore this preposterous remark and move on.

That someone hasn't "served a day for his country" is irrelevant. This is a common criticism, always aimed at the anti-war faction. Does this suggest that only soldiers can speak about war? If so, George W. Bush, and most of his administration, has no business discussing it either.

Finally, let's think about the author's most understandable error: that the American government is "doing what any country would do in their position."

This speaks volumes about our political and moral culture. It is also demonstrably untrue.

Imagine that American fundamentalist Christians decided that they hated Muslims (which, incidentally, many do), and that they were going to commit a terrorist act, killing thousands of people in Kabul. Imagine then that Afghanistan - if they had the military might - decided to retaliate through extensive bombing of the United States (to spread freedom and democracy, as the saying goes). The universal response, throughout North America and Europe, would be outrage. We would suggest to them that other means must be explored.

And we'd be right.

The analogy does not work, of course; we all know full well that our humans are more valuable than theirs. This is evidently the author's position, which, to her credit, is usual in every respect.

Michael Belyea

### Corrections to list

I just read this week's issue (September 27th), and I am irked by your list of things you don't need to know. Specifically, several of these facts are simply not true. Of the facts you printed, I know (and have sources to prove) that at least the following are untrue:

1. On a Canadian two-dollar bill, the flag flying over the Parliament building in an American flag.

Where do you come up with this stuff? The flag flying over parliament on the two-dollar bill is clearly the Canadian flag. All one has to do is look at a bill to see this is true. Now, as for our five and ten dollar bills (the old ones, not the new ones), they do not show a Canadian flag. What they do show, however, is the Red Ensign flag, not the US flag. The two are easily confused.

2. All of the clocks in the movie *Pulp Fiction* are stuck on 4:20.

Not entirely true. The watch Christopher Walken gives the young boy is actually set for 9:00. Technically, however, I guess that a watch is not a "clock"...still, it's a timepiece.

3. The average human eats eight spiders each year.

In 1993, Lisa Holst, a columnist for *PC Professional*, wrote about the lists of "facts" that were making their rounds on the Internet and how they were accepted as truthful. As a demonstration, she offered her own made-up list of equally ridiculous "facts," one of which was this ridiculous statistic. In an interesting turn of events, people now believe it to be true.

4. Donald Duck comics were banned in Finland because he doesn't wear pants.

In 1977 Helsinki's mayor, Mr. Markku Holopainen, proposed that the city stop buying Donald Duck comics for youth centers in an effort to better

use funds. He became known to the press as the man who banned Donald Duck from Helsinki. A similar event happened in the Finnish town of Kemi a few years earlier. The papers there exaggerated the event, which was also due to budgeting, not nudity, and blamed it instead on Donald's lack of pants. The story got to the western world, where it ran in several newspapers, and when these stories got back to Finland, the local press ran them as true, even though they were the ones who started the rumors. Strange how the media work sometimes.

5. More people are killed by donkeys annually than are killed in plane crashes.

Boy, have I heard this one before. None of the research I've done can prove it, but that's not what I'm trying to do. All I ask then is that you guys prove it. By the way, the American Donkey and Mule Society's web site vehemently denies this statistic ([www.lovelongears.com/faq.html](http://www.lovelongears.com/faq.html)).

Andre Gallant

### Again, corrections

Re: list of "Things you don't need to know": I'd like to correct one of them, and expand on the other.

You write: "a dragonfly has a life span of one to six months"

This is not true. The adult stage is that brief, but the life span is widely varied depending on the species, and ranges from 6 months to 7 or 8 years. See [www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/insects/dragonfly/Dragonflyprintout.shtml](http://www.enchantedlearning.com/subjects/insects/dragonfly/Dragonflyprintout.shtml) and several other sources.

Most dragonflies found in New Brunswick live a season or two as aquatic larvae (nymphs), and are not difficult to find if you know what you're looking for.

You write: "The word racecar and kayak are the same whether they are read from left to right or right to left." These forms are called palindromes and they are an object of interest to some people. For more examples, see: [www.palindromes.org/](http://www.palindromes.org/)

Bill Briggs

## Higher education, brought to you by Clearasil

### Seventeen magazine's university ratings

by Aubrey Henretty

(U-WIRE) ANN ARBOR, Mich. — Are you a cool girlfriend? Are you a diva? Are you college material? In a stunning display of hot colors, cool fonts and hard-hitting journalism, the October issue of *Seventeen* magazine asks its readership all three of these tough questions.

You'll have to forgive my cynicism. It's just that I bought this magazine instead of dinner Sunday night, swallowed my pride and coughed up \$3.99 because I wanted to see what *Seventeen's* editors had to say about my own humble University of Michigan, which they ranked number 10 on their list of The 50 Coolest Colleges. I was hoping to find evidence that I'd been wrong about *Seventeen* all these years, that it and other magazines of its ilk were not products

of a vast teeny bopper industry ploy to make a lot of money making little girls dumber.

I can't say it looked promising. Reese Witherspoon was staring sultrily at me, surrounded by promises of the latest on Josh Hartnett's college years and outfit suggestions for college interviews and hot dates. Lots of capital letters. Not exactly *The Princeton Review*, but I was willing to give it a chance. Maybe the content of the article would make up for the presentation. I mumbled something about the pursuit of knowledge to the bookstore clerk as he dropped my receipt and my penny into my outstretched hand. He nodded politely.

I have to digress for a moment here to explain why people should care about what makes it onto the pages of these magazines. They seem innocuous enough, offering bright colors and hip quizzes to the girls who love them. Young teenagers and preteens are generally selfish creatures. In most cases, they don't lose sleep over anything that

will actually matter to themselves or anybody else 10 years down the line. They don't read *Seventeen* for college advice.

But this is the first contact many of them will have with periodicals and the printed word and what they read at this level has the power to shape attitudes and expectations more than we or they like to think. So any nudge in the direction of higher education is good for the nation's junior female population, right? Wrong. What even I forgot in my eagerness to give *Seventeen* a chance is that presentation is everything. Girls (boys, too, I suppose) this age will care about what they think they're supposed to care about; these magazines teach them to confuse substance with style.

Here's an example: "We couldn't find a college survey aimed at girls," the table of contents said, "so we did our own, based on what matters to you." Already, we have two false assumptions: First, that girls want or need their college surveys to be printed on scented pink

paper and second, that what matters to them is not the same as what matters to boys searching for the perfect college. These assumptions respectively discourage ambition (i.e. 'tis better to wait for a hand-written invitation than to show up with a notebook like everyone else) and re-enforce existing perceived divides in the way boys and girls think.

The eight-page feature itself was beset on both sides by page after page of advertisements. "We won't bore you with the math behind The 50 Coolest Colleges," swears a statement between the list and the "Are you college material?" quiz. Because math doesn't matter, girls! What matters, it says, are boy-to-girl ratios and quality of mass transit, proximity to shopping opportunities and financial aid programs and access to co-ed dormitories.

Wait a second. I was skimming. Did that say financial aid and mass transit? Like, scholarships and buses and stuff?

I'm confused.

Since the editors didn't want to bore her with the math, a girl can only assume they assigned equal importance to her statistical chances of snagging a future doctor/lawyer/engineer boy and the number of miles to the nearest Abercrombie and Fitch outlet.

I guess I can see why this would be important to a magazine whose primary purpose is to sell products, but for actual girls looking to further their educations, these are pretty worthless factors to consider. The problem with placing them next to things that might really matter is that *Seventeen's* readership might be too young to know the difference or care. The magazine's editors don't have a responsibility to educate their readers, but they also shouldn't pretend that's what they're doing; framing college in terms of designer dorm accessories and dressing to impress is a self-serving, sponsor-friendly sham.

My advice? Skip the magazine. Get dinner instead.