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Best of the Web Today

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A Show of Hands

NEW YORK--The other night we attended the first-of-the-season Intelligence Squared debate. We've been going to these for a while and always find them interesting and stimulating. This week's topic was health-care policy, and one of the panelists arguing for more federal control was former Enron adviser Paul Krugman.

At one point, Krugman asked for a show of hands in order to prove a point, but it didn't turn out as he expected (see pages 43-44 of the transcript; ABC's John Donvan was the moderator):

Krugman: --and I wanted to ask, actually two questions, to the audience. First, how many Canadians, would Canadians in the room please raise your hands. [One person applauds, laughter]

Donvan: We have about seven hands going up—

Krugman: OK, not as many as I thought. OK, of those of you who are not on the panel who are Canadians, how many of you think you have a terrible health care system. [pause] One, two—

Donvan: We see—almost all of the same hands going up. [laughter]

Krugman: Bad move on my part [applause]. I've got a selected--all right, I won't try it. But I will say, that—

We never did find out what Krugman was going to say, though it appears he was alluding to a selection bias that affected the sample of Canadians in the audience. We don't usually agree with Krugman, but we have to admit, he had a point. The Canadians in the audience could not be representative of their countrymen. Just that they were in America meant that they were lucky enough to get out alive.