



*MacDonald on Alexei Kovalev and the Montreal Canadiens' return to thrill-a-minute glory*

# ISSUES &

## DEAR BONO, ...

PETER A. SINGER

... I am sorry to miss your concert in Ottawa tonight. What you are doing for the developing world is amazing. Frankly, you deserve to add the Nobel Peace Prize to your collection of Grammys.

Tonight, no doubt, you will repeat what you have done during past Canadian U2 concerts, and flash the Prime Minister's telephone number on the screen. You will encourage fans to ask the PM to boost Canada's foreign-aid outlays to 0.7% of GDP, the internationally recognized benchmark for Western nations. Certainly, you have given Mr. Martin fair warning: You once promised you would be a "pain in the butt" to the PM if he failed to make good on the 0.7% target.

As you know, the 0.7% idea was first proposed by another Canadian prime minister, Lester Pearson, over 30 years ago. Although few countries now meet this standard, it has had a galvanizing effect on the international community. To your great credit, Bono, you have seized on this tangible target and done your best to shame world leaders into increasing their foreign-aid commitments.

But rather than focusing exclusively on the 0.7% benchmark, you should also ask fans to congratulate the PM regarding another target — the one he set in his February, 2004, speech from the Throne. By pledging to devote 5% of Canada's research-and-development spending to challenges facing the developing world, Mr. Martin recognized that science can do as much for the world's poor as aid.

Canada's total research-and-development spending — both public and private — amounts to about \$23.5-billion per year, so the 5% target would yield a little more than \$1-billion annually. In last week's economic update, the Finance Minister confirmed that the federal government would move toward that goal by investing in a variety of developing-world priorities, including "health and environmental technologies." Currently, Ottawa's own R&D spending amounts to about \$5.5-billion per year, so meeting its share of the 5% target would mean about \$300-million, double the current level of federal spending earmarked for developing-world issues.

You may ask, Bono, why your fans should support this 5% target. Take, for example, the problem of malaria, a disease that kills a child about once every 30 seconds, with most deaths occurring in Africa. Which of the following solutions is best: distributing insecticide-soaked bed-nets, improving access to existing anti-malarial drugs, supporting the discovery of



Bono on Parliament Hill on May 12, 2004.

JIM YOUNG / REUTERS

new anti-malarial drugs, supporting the development of a malaria vaccine, or developing a genetic strategy to incapacitate a malaria-transmitting insect population?

The answer is that *all* of these solutions should be pursued. As you move down the list, the role of science becomes more important, the time frame becomes longer, and you also get closer to addressing the root of the problem. Of course, we should be shipping bed-nets to save children now from this humanitarian catastrophe — that's where the 0.7% foreign-aid target comes in. But if all we do is ship bed-nets, then 10 years from now we will still be shipping bed-nets. The development of a malaria vaccine, by

contrast, would, over time, eliminate the need for bed-nets. And that's where the 5% target comes in.

This same argument plays out across dozens of health and environmental challenges facing the developing world — including HIV, and unsafe drinking water. While the 0.7% target was a product of the old economy — food, clothing, shelter, infrastructure and so forth — the 5% target is looking to harness the potential of the new economy, biotechnology especially, to find lasting solutions to significant challenges in developing countries. As you say in your song, *Miracle Drug*, "Of science and the human heart/ There is no limit."

(On the other hand, for a govern-

ment that is constrained by very real budget limits, it should be noted that some of Canada's 5% spending would count toward the achievement of a 0.7% target. So two humanitarian, Bono-pleasing targets could be achieved at once.)

But as you know, Bono, neither of these targets is really about spending money. Rather, they are about using our resources to make a difference in the lives of people in the developing world who have, ethically, the same right to a fulfilled, healthy life as we do; but for whom, in practice, this right has been eclipsed by poverty, hunger and disease.

So how should Canada implement the Prime Minister's 5% target?

First, as I argued on these pages two weeks ago, it should build on the US\$432-million Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation Grand Challenges in Global Health Initiative (in which the Canadian Institutes of Health Research is already a partner) to create a Canadian Grand Challenges Program. The Gates program primarily targets infectious disease. Its Canadian equivalent should target non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes. It could also be used to provide access to safe drinking water. These are global problems, but also ones that have tragic relevance to our own aboriginal communities.

Second, we should launch a "Giving Back" program to assist the many Canadians who have immigrated to Canada from developing and emerging-market countries. Through these programs, doctors, researchers, engineers and other professionals living in Canada could share their knowledge and expertise with their countries of origin. In this regard, Canada is perhaps uniquely positioned in the world to combine two of its greatest strengths — multiculturalism and science — to help to bridge the technological divide that separates the developed and developing worlds.

Third, we should extend our Canada Research Chairs program — which currently supports professors in Canadian universities — so that it supports professors in developing-world universities, especially those in Africa.

Fourth, we should extend the focus of our Networks of Centres of Excellence Program, which helps scientists and entrepreneurs co-operate to tackle domestic problems, to global problems like climate change and adaptation.

Finally, we should scale up the existing Global Health Research Initiative of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Canadian International Development Agency, International Development Research Centre, and Health Canada.

If Canada shows leadership by launching these and other initiatives, then other countries may well follow our lead. Consider this: Five percent of the research and development spending of industrialized countries is \$50-billion.

So, Bono, when you flash the Prime Minister's phone number tonight, ask your fans to tell him his 5% target is cool, and that these innovative initiatives should be implemented in Budget 2006.

Anyway, I wish I could be there. Good luck, tonight!

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## The return of les glorieux

L. IAN MACDONALD  
in Montreal

The return of the game is the talk of the town. The Alouettes may be in the Grey Cup, the Expos may be in Washington, but the Canadiens are in the Bell Centre, sold out again the other night for the 13th consecutive time this season.

It isn't just the fact that the Canadiens are winning that's putting 21,273 people in the building night after night. It isn't even the way they're winning one-goal games in the third period, in overtime, or, as against Atlanta Tuesday night, in a thrilling shootout.

No, it's the return of the game, Montreal's brand of fire-wagon hockey, the game we knew and loved before it was ruined by Jacques Lemaire and the trap, the dump and run and the clutch and grab. It's the return of the Habs, sweeping down the ice, headmanning the puck, and breaking, always breaking, for the net. The image is framed in the immortal words of Danny Gallivan: "Now, here come the Canadiens!"

Once again, they are wearing the Big Red at home, the preferred home jersey of millions of Canadian kids even during the years the Habs wore red on the road.

Finally, it's the return of the noise, the surging roar of a Montreal hockey crowd, the most impassioned and discerning in the game. It is the same sound that was the trademark of the Montreal Forum when it was home to 24

Stanley Cup champions, a sound that has been largely missing since 1996, when the Canadiens moved to what was then the Molson Centre.

It's not a very good building — it's far too big to be user friendly and its corridors are far too congested. Fans must make a choice: They can have a beer or go to the washroom during an intermission, but not both.

And for many years, the Canadiens were not a very good team. A nadir was reached in the proud history of *les glorieux* a few years ago when they were shut out at home by a first-year expansion team called the Columbus Blue

Jackets, who sounded as if they had just been called up from the International League.

The arrival of Pierre Boivin as the Canadiens' president, and the hiring of Bob Gainey as general-manager, were evident turning points for the better. Boivin has both a sense of history and a sense of occasion (evident in this season's celebration of the team's past — including the retirement of Yvan Cournoyer's and Dickie Moore's #12 and of Bernie "Boom-Boom" Geoffrion's #5). Gainey has a sense of what it takes to return the Stanley Cup to its rightful home. (In all, Montreal teams, including the Maroons,

have won the Stanley Cup 36 times.)

Boivin has also played a leadership role with the NHL board of governors in lobbying for much needed improvements to the rules — none more so than the two-line pass — which have opened up the game. So has the strict enforcement against hooking, tripping, holding and interference. As a result, several Montreal home games, notably against Toronto and the very talented Ottawa Senators, have been wide-open end-to-enders.

But it's also the players on the ice — especially Alexei Kovalev. José Theodore is a favourite son, and Saku Koivu is an inspirational captain, but Kovalev is the best puck handler the city has ever seen. Not even Jean Beliveau, the greatest Canadian of them all, had Kovalev's lateral vision.

As a free agent last summer, he could

have signed for more money somewhere else, but chose to remain in Montreal because he wanted to play in a hockey town. The city has fallen in love with the Russian superstar. And the feeling is reciprocal. When presented as one of the three stars, a regular occurrence, he blows kisses to the crowd.

As for the past, it is represented by Beliveau — captain of five Stanley Cup winners, a member of 10, with his name on eight more as an executive — sitting behind the Canadiens bench. And there is the Rocket, Maurice Richard, whose role as a *hero d'un peuple*, is celebrated in the movie that opens today. In a radio interview on his birthday in 1997, I asked him what he thought of the eight-minute ovation that swept over him on the night they closed the Forum in 1996. He was overwhelmed, he said, "because I'm just a hockey player."

The first time I went to the Forum in 1957, my father had the company seats in the reds, and we could hear the Rocket call for the puck from his brother, Henri. He broke across the blue line, went in and scored against Boston. "Daddy," I said, "the Canadiens are the greatest team in the world."

The last time I went to the Forum, on that final Saturday night in 1996, the Canadiens showed up and beat Pittsburgh 7-3. My daughter Grace, then just five, was attending her first game. "Daddy," she said, "the Canadiens are the greatest team in the world."

It's finally beginning to feel like that at the Bell Centre.

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Alexandra Bilodeau and Melodie Huneault show their support at the Canadiens' home opener at the Bell Centre on Oct. 14.

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