

Jan. 7: Letters to the editor; Today's topics: hockey pride and hysteria, airport security and hysteria, power, money, the Senate, the armadillo and the turtle ... and more

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Body

ABSTRACT

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FULL TEXT

Pride and hysteria

Well, we lost the gold-medal game of the world junior hockey championship for the first time in six years (The Winning Streak Is Over (<http://v1.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/LAC.20100106.MACGREGORLOSE06ART2319/TPStory/TPComment>) - **Jan.** 6). Them's the breaks, but chances are we'll win it again next year and, really, it is just a game. So it's rather surprising to read your front-page lament that the result is "a shocking blow to national pride." Isn't that a tad hysterical?

Of course, it would've been a fully appropriate response to, say, our government's performance at the Copenhagen climate conference. But perhaps that issue is just not important enough to touch our national pride. Future generations might understandably be somewhat baffled by this failure of perspective.

Byron Williston, chair, Department of Philosophy, Wilfrid Laurier University, Waterloo, Ont.

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Believe me, many Canadians aren't terribly bothered by an American win in a Canadian game. In fact, there are several million Canadians who don't give a flying puck about "our game" at all. But we're really bothered by our country's zealous obsession with hockey, and the lack of passion for anything worthwhile. There, I said it. Now burn me at the stake for being such a heretic.

Diana Colleran, Guelph, Ont.

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Let's all applaud those kids who did their best and finished second. But the loss of a hockey game is hardly a blow to national pride. Stephen Harper's disregard for democracy is. The Conservatives' lack of regard for the fate of Afghan prisoners is. Mr. Harper seems to have decided that Canada is no longer in the game on many world issues. That's a blow to national pride.

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Joan Janzen, Toronto

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C'mon, relax. It's only a game. We can be grateful they aren't attacking our wedding parties with drones.

Edward Mullens, Owen Sound, Ont.

Security and hysteria

Transport Minister John Baird wants airport security personnel to be on the lookout for stressed or anxious passengers (They'll Be Watching: Airport Staff To Be Trained To Spot Shady Behaviour (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/theyll-be-watching-airport-staff-to-be-trained-to-spot-shady-behaviour/article1420465/>) - front page, **Jan.** 6). That'll really narrow it down.

Walter Tedman, Kingston, Ont.

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Who cares about the body scan? I'd rather travel naked than without books (Book Ban Bashed (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/Somnia/article1420232/>) - **Jan.** 6).

Bruno Masquillier, Calgary

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Is it true Air Canada is now offering discounts to nudists?

A. Trevor Hodge, Ottawa

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It seems unlikely that Yemeni security forces "are observing and pursuing [al-Qaeda]around the clock" (Friction Develops In Yemen-U.S. Partnership To Fight Terror (http://ca.news.yahoo.com/s/capress/100105/world/ml_yemen_al_qaida) - Jan 6). According to the World Health Organization, nearly 90 per cent of adult Yemeni males chew qat - a mildly narcotic leaf that can induce euphoria and conversation but is often followed by manic swings, depression and hallucinations.

Sarah Wolfe, assistant professor, Department of Environment and Resource Studies, University of Waterloo

It's all about power

Tom Flanagan's article on the never-ending political campaign (1. Polarization 2. Ad Hoc Alliances 3. Fear Of Election (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/polarization-ad-hoc-alliances-fear-of-election/article1419988/>) - **Jan.** 6) was quite disturbing, all the more so in that it clearly reflects Stephen Harper's thinking: The ends justify the means, and the only end is power for its own sake. Legislative agendas don't matter. The economy doesn't matter. The Afghan war doesn't matter. The only thing worth considering is how power is attained and maintained.

It makes Rick Mercer's adjacent column Proroguing Is For Children (And Stephen Harper) (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/proroguing-is-for-children-and-stephen-harper/article1420026/>) - predicated on the quaint notion that politicians, however imperfect, are nonetheless elected to serve the interests of the people and will try to do so - sound as naive and idealistic as a child's **letter** to Santa Claus.

Kevin Marc Fournier, Winnipeg

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It's all about money

In your defence of Canadian CEOs' salary increases (Mistaken Comparison (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/editorials/mistaken-comparison/article1420431/>) - editorial, **Jan.** 6), you overstate the linkage between profit-making and innovation and the imagined miraculous creation of value out of thin air. Your list of "impressive innovators" includes BCE, Potash Corp. and Rogers Communications. Their business innovations would not, I suspect, receive much applause from the average Canadian cable subscriber or recipient of resource industry pollution.

Artists know a thing or two about outside-the-box innovation, value-added work and others taking credit for and receiving salaries from their work. Thankfully, the measurable benchmarks of artistic innovation are not usually championed via some galling sermon on what might help improve the declining standard of living for the average Canadian.

Despite your editorial efforts, there will be more - not less - outrage at CEO compensation narcissism in both the private and public sectors. The imminent shock-and-awe wave of expected cutbacks guarantees that those shocked will far outnumber those in awe of the average top-100 CEO salary.

Clive Robertson, Kingston, Ont.

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Many years ago, Peter Drucker, the distinguished business writer, offered a solution to CEOs' runaway compensation without limiting it: Peg it to the average income of his workers; as he raises his own income, he increases theirs. Mr. Drucker used as his sample the fact that the average Japanese CEO earned 11 times his worker's income. In 2008, the top 100 Canadian CEOs' pay was \$7.35-million - or 173 times the average worker's.

Rick Walker, Toronto

No cheques, please

While I agree cheques fill a need for certain financial transactions (In Cheques We Trust (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/jan-5-letters-to-the-editor/article1418877/>) - **letters**, **Jan.** 5, and Endangered Paper (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/editorials/endangered-paper/article1417075/>) - editorial, **Jan.** 2), they're an inconvenience, especially for those receiving one. You have to go to the bank to deposit it, then wait days for it to clear. Despite the annoyance, however, we keep cheques around because there are still occasions when they're the easiest alternative to cash.

Today, you can send money any number of ways online, the simplest method now being mobile payments. With PayPal, for example, all you need is a person's phone number. It won't be long before the cheque is part of Canadian history, like the telegram. I won't say the cheque will die completely (after all, it's still possible to send a telegram), but it shouldn't be the way we pay or get paid in the 21st century.

Darrell MacMullin, general manager, PayPal Canada, Toronto

More than just shoes

In his op-ed Stop Stomping On The Flag (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/stop-stomping-on-the-flag/article1418702/>) (**Jan.** 6), J.L. Granatstein complains that, on the Afghan detainee issue, there's only "one case on display [involving] a suspected Taliban member" who was hit with shoes. "Whatever else this was," Mr. Granatstein says, "it was not torture."

I was one of the lawyers for Amnesty International Canada and the B.C. Civil Liberties Association in their case before Madam Justice Anne Mactavish of the Federal Court. In her decision, Judge Mactavish found that, in just one six-month interval of 2007, "eight complaints of prisoner abuse" were received by Canadian personnel. The

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detainees' allegations included being "kicked, beaten with electrical cables, given electric shocks, cut, burned, shackled, and made to stand for days at a time."

Judge Mactavish agreed that some of the detainees "bore physical signs that were consistent with their allegations." She said Canada had to give serious consideration to possible future detainee transfers and "exposing detainees to a substantial risk of torture."

Amir Attaran, Canada Research Chair in Law, Population Health and Global Development Policy, University of Ottawa

What about that Senate, eh?

So the Conservatives are renewing their plan to push for an elected Senate, presumably to make our Parliament more democratic (Tories Renew Plan To Push For Elected Senate (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/harper-to-revive-senate-reform-plan/article1420300/>) - front page, **Jan.** 6). Isn't that like putting wings on a tank to make it more airworthy?

David Lailey, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont.

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Stanley Knowles, the late NDP stalwart and long-time MP, had a practical proposal for reforming the Senate: Abolish it and turn the chamber itself into a gymnasium.

Bill Boyd, Lakefield, Ont.

The armadillo and the turtle

Re Why Chavez Is About To Lose Clout (<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/opinions/why-chavez-and-co-are-about-to-lose-clout/article1419987/>) (**Jan.** 6): Is an American think tank actually condemning a Latin American country for "foreign interventionism"? The Venezuelan aphorism for such an assertion is "an armadillo telling a turtle it is too hard shelled."

Peter Gorman, Toronto

Baby planners?

As an expecting mother, I know far too well the excitement and stress of preparing for the arrival of our first child. But I can't believe that mothers are hiring baby planners for "a smooth transition" (Feathering The Nest - With Expert Help (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34243979/ns/health-pregnancy/>) - Life, **Jan.** 5). Women and men have been raising children for thousands of years with far less financial resources, equipment and gadgets that are currently available.

If these women find shopping for a stroller stressful, I can't imagine how they'll survive labour or waking up six times a night to feed/change their child. Oh right, the nanny will do it. Mea culpa!

Kristine Dandavino, Oshawa, Ont.

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