

session and games in Sweden and a game or games in Czechoslovakia.

### Eagleson in control

Unfortunately Mr. Hay took sick shortly after Mr. Sinden was named as manager-coach. Before his future contribution could be determined, Mr. Eagleson took over effective control of the team side of the operation, naming it Team Canada and hiring the trainers and other personnel, choosing hotel and travel arrangements. In effect, Mr. Eagleson, not Mr. Sinden, became the leader of the team. This initiative, quite unexpected by both Hockey Canada and NHL leaders, was given a further force when the time came for consideration of TV contracts for the series.

As a director of Hockey Canada, Mr. Eagleson disagreed with the tentative arrangements it had made to sell the TV rights to "Hockey Night in Canada" for \$500,000. When he was challenged to find better alternatives, he asked for time. He constituted a non-profit company in concert with Harold Ballard, owner of the Maple Leaf Gardens and another Hockey Canada director. Their company guaranteed Hockey Canada a minimum of \$750,000 for the North American TV and radio rights to the series. The offer had to be accepted, and, given the pervasive influence of TV on hockey arrangements, it put another aspect of series arrangements in Mr. Eagleson's control. The steering committee of Hockey Canada created because of Mr. Hay's illness had Mr. Eagleson as a participant.

Before the team members were announced in early July, Mr. Campbell had reminded Hockey Canada and Mr. Eagleson that the owners understood that candidates for the team must have signed contracts for the next season with their NHL team before they came to Team Canada's training camp. Bobby Hull, one of the ablest and most popular NHL players, had defected from the Chicago NHL team to the Winnipeg entry of the WHA in late June. The whole WHA had underwritten Mr. Hull's massive signing bonus and salary in order to gain the credibility for excellence which he gave to the new league.

Mr. Sinden named his 35 "best" players and included Bobby Hull. A national uproar followed when it was made clear by Hockey Canada that Hull would not be acceptable unless he was signed to a 1972-73 contract with his old club. This seemed to contradict Hockey Canada's much mooted objective of icing "our best". In Western Canada especially, it was seen as another example of NHL domination of Canadian hockey.

As chairman of the *ad hoc* steering committee for the series, I knew there would be a national hue and cry over the Hull matter if we honoured our understanding with the NHL. If we insisted that Hull should play, we would lose many of the other players whom Sinden had named. Mr. Eagleson could not guarantee that he could provide an excellent team even from his own 25 clients. The best of the latter, Bobby Orr, was a doubtful starter because of a knee operation.

Hockey Canada decided after a long internal debate, political interventions from the Prime Minister and strong disagreement from a minority of its directors to go only with NHL players. The decision was most unpopular with the Canadian public, weakening further Hockey Canada's none too strong reputation.

While the Hull decision was still a public controversy, Mr. Eagleson and his team leaders, including Mr. Sinden, took off for Moscow and Stockholm to line up details on the series, including television coverage, percentages and practice arrangements in the Soviet Union and Sweden. This tour confirmed that he was the executive at the core of almost every important aspect of the series. His leadership was confirmed by the mix of awe and affection which the sporting press of Canada held for him. Most of Hockey Canada's small cadre of permanent people did not qualify as "snowbankers", that is, genuine hockey buffs. And as Clarence Campbell has lamented: "If you're not a snowbanker, you don't rate among Canadian hockey people and fans."

Mr. Eagleson is a fast talker, a fast thinker, one of the best natural salesmen and traders I have ever met. Metaphorically, he was at the throttle of the series juggernaut; we were passengers, waiting to straighten up the accounts after it was all over.

Mr. Eagleson and Mr. Sinden were convinced that the Soviet team would be well-beaten in all eight games. They brushed aside any suggestions from some of us in Hockey Canada that they should consult with those who had played and coached against the Russians. We were old with some disdain to "Leave it to the pros" or "Don't burden us with bushers." Team Canada was not to be a "chintzy operation". It was to be "first-class all the way" for the 35 players and the other 15 people required to keep them happy and going. All was to befit the best player in the world.

Clearly, here was a man and team heading for a fall, almost deserving it in their cockiness. When the team assembled

*Barring of Hull  
produced uproar  
after NHL star  
on '35-best' list*