

ment, scheduled for the first time in Canada. Late in 1969 the U.S.S.R. forced a review of the compromise, arguing convincingly to spokesmen for countries like Sweden and Finland that playing against such a Canadian team would jeopardize the eligibility of their best players for the 1972 Sapporo Olympics.

Mr. Ahearne agreed with the Russians and, in January 1970, Canada was faced with the choice of giving up the tournament (and missing revenues of some \$600,000) or giving up its use of the pros as agreed to in Switzerland. Hockey Canada, after consultation with the CAHA and Mr. Munro, stood firm, lost the tournament, and refused to send a team to the new locale in Sweden.

Shortly afterward the national "team-in-being" was disbanded. From April 1970, Hockey Canada persisted in efforts to get the IIHF to change its ruling on pros. At the same time it approached the U.S.S.R., Sweden and Czechoslovakia with proposals for round-robin exhibition series in which Canada would use pros.

#### Annual draft

The killing of the tournament was especially hurtful in Winnipeg, one of the host cities and the base for the Bauer "team-in-being". The team would have been hard to sustain without any international competition in sight. Aside from that drawback, the expansion of the NHL was creating a mark-up in salaries and opportunities for hockey players with which educational scholarships and mere national representation could hardly compete.

In passing, we should note that out of the Task Force recommendations came an abandonment of the "amateur" farm system of the NHL in Canada and the institution of an annual draft of 20-year-old players. The draft payments went from the NHL to the amateur clubs through which the drafted players had developed. In 1972, this figure reached \$1.3 million. Of course, by this time, the NHL was doing an annual business of more than \$80 million and its new franchises were costing the successful bidders \$6 million each.

While a Hockey Canada-CAHA-federal troika, headed by President Charles Hay of Hockey Canada, worked on the Europeans for games with a team made up of our pros, Mr. Eagleson and his association had contracted with the NHL owners that neither group would enter international hockey competition unilaterally. Indeed, for several years Mr. Eagleson ranged around Europe trying on his own to set up a series between the NHL players and the Russians.

Mr. Hay believed that co-operation from the Europeans would become a fact once the '72 Winter Olympics were over. He was right. In April 1972, during the world tournament in Prague, the Soviet sports leaders formally agreed to an eight-game series for September, four games in Canada, four in Moscow. Canada could play anyone it wanted.

No sooner was the coup announced than it became apparent that the NHL owners, particularly the American ones, were much less enthusiastic about the series than was Mr. Eagleson. He used his bond with the players to dragoon the recalcitrant owners into line. One of his persuasive arguments was that half the net revenues of the series would go to supplement the NHL players' pension fund.

The achievement of Russian approval coincided with the appearance in substantial form of a new professional grouping, the World Hockey Association. This impudent rival to the NHL was sponsored by the American entrepreneurs who had launched the American Basketball Association. The WHA committed itself to the placing of four of its 12 franchises in Canada. The WHA insisted it would operate without a reserve clause. This meant a "player war" with the NHL and a fantastic bidding-up of salaries and the value of players as properties. These grand vistas for players were welcomed by the players' champion, Mr. Eagleson. If the NHL owners wished some stability in their labour force during their war with the WHA they needed, at the least, Mr. Eagleson's neutrality. This he gave in a general way and he did not antagonize the NHL by signing many of his own clients to WHA contracts.

Throughout the negotiations planned and completed by Mr. Hay with the Soviets, it had been understood by all the elements in Hockey Canada that the players for the September series would come from the NHL. Mr. Campbell agreed with this. So did Mr. Eagleson. It was also understood that team selection and management would be in the hands of men chosen with the advice of the NHL. It was agreed that Harry Sinden, a former coach of the Boston team, was the best man available to manage, choose and coach the team.

Hockey Canada, through Mr. Hay, conceded that Mr. Sinden should have complete control of the team side of the series. He would be accountable to Hockey Canada only for spending. Hockey Canada would arrange the series in matters involving tickets, television, radio, the U.S.S.R. team arrangements in Canada, the ancillary functions, the refereeing, and the tour in Europe, including a training

*American owners  
less enthused;  
bolstered fund  
used as argument*