

# Sport Diplomacy

waves from the speeded-up national heartbeat have also penetrated far into the inner sanctums of business, government, advertising and education.

For instance, special fitness programs have been developed and successfully carried out in Canadian schools from coast to coast. In addition, fitness education and motivation programs have been designed and implemented for Canadian government personnel. And more and more, Canadian corporate managements are subscribing to employee fitness plans because they have learned that fit employees stay on the job with less absenteeism and greater productivity.

Today, the land is rich with joggers, swimmers, cyclists, walkers, skiers, lifters, benders, and swingers of racquets and clubs. And these . . . of all ages. It is not an oddity in Canada to see people ice- or roller-skating to work, 65-year-olds cycling, or women in business dress and running shoes heading for the office.

Canada has changed and the Canadian lifestyle has been redefined. What is emerging is a conscious sense of national life into which the fitness idea has been incorporated. A fire has been lit under the seat of one of the least-fit nations in the world and Canadians are not sitting around to savour the warmth.



**S**port has universal appeal. It attracts all ages and all strata of society. It cuts across political, cultural and religious boundaries. It's an obvious way to bridge nations.

Recognizing this opportunity, the Canadian government recently reviewed the role of sport in Canadian foreign policy, which led to an International Sports Relations Program. Sports is now recognized as an integral part of Canadian diplomacy.

The time is right. Canadians are the best in the world in a variety of sports. Ben Johnson proved to 300 million viewers the world over that he is the "fastest man alive." Brian Orser has captured the World Figure Skating crown. Gail Greenough stunned European audiences when she won the coveted Equestrian World

Cup. The extraordinary efforts of disabled athletes like Rick Hansen and Steve Fonyo greatly enhanced the international image of Canada. In addition to the upcoming Olympic Winter Games, Canada has recently hosted the World University Games, the Commonwealth Games and the Summer Olympics, as well as a number of world championships.

The new sports program will begin by building on what already exists: a steady stream of top Canadian sporting talent going about the regular business of competition in all parts of the world. As far as their training and competition schedules permit, Canadian athletes will be engaged as good-will ambassadors at trade fairs and similar events throughout the world.

Secretary of State for External Affairs Joe Clark and Fitness and Amateur Sports Minister Otto Jelinek. Sport's universal appeal makes it an ideal tool for bridging nations.

The intended result is that sport can help to promote international co-operation and mutual understanding. Sport can also serve as a vehicle for increased contacts and respect between East and West.

Sport diplomacy has the potential to give added substance to Canada's commitment to the Third World and to multilateral institutions such as the Commonwealth and la Francophonie. At a time when Canadian athletic endeavours are capturing the world's attention, the potential to reach out to other nations through sport has never been greater.