

# Drapeau's Montreal: Olympics sold out

By BRUCE KIDD

## From Canadian Dimension

Two summers ago when black athletes in the United States searched their souls about participation or boycott of the Olympic Games, few Canadian athletes could empathize with their agony. It was all too far away.

But today we face a similar dilemma; how to react to a program that satisfies our fondest hopes as athletes, but only at the expense of many others.

Under ordinary circumstances, nothing could be sweeter than the Olympics in Montreal. There'd be no travel or acclimatization problems, and the Canadian crowd would be worth buckets of adrenalin. To avoid the hassles and claustrophobia of the Olympic Village, I could train in Toronto and simply take the Rapido down the evening before my race. And for a marathon runner (as I'll be in 1975) who likes the hills, Mount Royal is made to order.

## Social services sacrificed

But at this point in time, it doesn't look as if the Montreal Olympics will be held under what could be considered "ordinary circumstances". Mayor Drapeau's plans for the Games indicate a deliberate preference for political monuments rather than for social betterment. If his Games preparations further drain an already inadequate budget for social services, a lot of angry citizens are going to picket the Games. Six years is a long time to repress grievances. As events in Mexico City prior to those Games demonstrated, such pickets will be difficult to disperse.

Drapeau has already announced he will cut back existing programs to finance his Games: "If we get the Olympics," he cheerfully promised a press conference last week, "it won't cost the taxpayers a cent. Suppose our recreation budget is \$6 million a year. That gives us \$36 million over six years and we give Olympic facilities the priority. We can make a lot of repairs and do a lot of building just using that money." Meanwhile all the other municipal recreation programs — the arts, adult education, little league hockey — go hungry.

## Money needed elsewhere

Six years of cultural barrenness will be the least of Montreal's problems. The city doesn't have a sewage system worthy of the name — it can treat only eight per cent of its daily output of raw sewage — and it's not likely to be able to finance one with the demands of the Olympics. With 460 million gallons of raw sewage being pumped daily into the St. Lawrence, the river will be on its last legs by 1976. You can't hold a regatta on a dead river.

Drapeau's arrogant indifference to the real needs of his city is best illustrated by his plans for the Olympic Village: a low income area of the city will be razed and \$120 million of concrete apartments poured. Some people living in that area may want to keep their homes and their present neighborhood — already one local group, le Rassemblement des Associations Populaires, has announced its opposition to the Games on these grounds — but no matter. Why, the Olympics are the Olympics.

## Athletes trapped

Where does the athlete stand on all this? He loves to compete, especially when the Olympics come only every four years, but he's a citizen too.

If the Olympics mean the devastation of communities and a precious natural resource, are the Olympics worth having? If the athlete has trained 10 years for this event and feels he must compete, how does he register his protest? And what does he do if the Canadian Olympic Association throws him off the team (as the American Association did with black protesters Smith and Carlos in Mexico)? How will he handle that familiar homily that politics has no place in sport?

It should be noted that the International Olympic Committee gives the athlete (and the City of Montreal) no assistance in this regard. It knew as early as the Rome Olympics 10 years ago that future Games could not be accommodated and managed without extraordinary financial sacrifice by the host city. Other Games have realized their quadrennial burden is too great for a single community and have begun to stage competitions in different communities. This summer's European Games, for example, will be spread over four different cities. But any tampering with its spectacle is anathema to the self-appointed IOC. So it cost the Mexicans \$60 million which they could ill afford. So what? The show must go on.

The amateur code is not the only Victorian relic defended by IOC

members. They're equally intractable about the good time they insist they must have. I was in Tokyo in 1966 just after the IOC had awarded the 1972 Winter Games to Sapporo. The announcement stunned the Japanese for they had only entered a bid at the last moment in preparation for a more serious attempt four years later. To my friends on the Japanese Olympic Committee, only one explanation seemed to make sense: the IOC delegates had been wine-dined, dined and geishaed so well in 1964 that they wanted more.

## Freeloaders' Games

Jean Drapeau has catered to this inclination of the IOC — in 1967, at least 30 Committee members spent a week at Expo at Montreal's expense — and it augurs not well for the Games. They promise to be the Fun Games, the Freeloaders' Games, where officials, press and tourists can tie one on for two weeks in a gala, international improvement on the Grey Cup Weekend. Somehow the purpose of the Olympics, the furtherance of international sport, seems to be forgotten.

(In this connection, Montreal's recent experience with international sport offer little hope. The 1967 Europe vs. Americas Track Meet, held at the Autostade, was one of the most insensitively

officiated major international events on record.)

Of course, it doesn't have to be this way, and Drapeau has enough lead time to put our fears to rest. If he can woo Pierre Trudeau as successfully as he wooed the IOC — and no question, he's the shrewdest supplicant in Canada — then the financial burden can be spread across the country and some of Montreal's running sores can be attended to. And if he can get some guidance from the people who directed Winnipeg's 1967 Pan-American Games — where the community was so heavily involved that it became the People's Games — then riots in 1976 can be avoided.

The Magician of Montreal silenced his critics with the World's Fair of 1967 and hopefully he can do so again. Most anxious among the watchers will be Canadian athletes, who'll be the beneficiaries of the Games no matter what happens. For most of us, the Olympics is a precious experience, representing the best of sport and international brotherhood, and making all those miserable evenings of training through the snow worthwhile. Soldiers guarding the Olympic Stadium against outraged and dispossessed Montrealers would ruin this experience. Let's hope they won't be necessary.

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