

SPORTS

University hockey at a crossroads

by Bernie Poitras

Like most other sports leagues, the Canadian Intercollegiate Athletic Hockey Union (CIAU) has its problems.

Fortunately, the CIAU is willing to admit that and seems ready to correct them.

Although they are not well publicized, these problems are ones major enough that, in time, could prove disastrous to hockey in this country.

They list something like this:

1. The player recruiting done by collegiate coaches has, according to some people, been less than satisfactory;

2. As a result of this, the CIAU has lost some top high-school and junior players to the NCAA (universities in the US);

3. The CIAU hockey programs have now become what amounts to an afterthought for hockey players who wish to enroll in a university and continue their hockey;

4. Probably the most serious problem that the CIAU hockey program has diminished in its competitiveness and has now become an afterthought for the fans as well.

Said 1984 Canadian Olympic team assistant coach Jean Perron at the annual CIAU awards banquet last week in Trois-Rivieres, "Hockey Canada (the governing body of hockey in Canada) is at a crossroads!"

That is probably the biggest understatement of the year. For those who are concerned about hockey in this country it is more of a matter of 'hockey being at a

crossroads and there is a cliff that lies ahead.' In dealing with the first problems outlined above, Perron maintained that there must be a 'leadership' provided by both coaches and players if recruitment is to become a No. 1 priority again. Perron stressed that coaches and players must 'go out' and tell prospective players about the program. Recruiting has to become more aggressive and not just a passive thing anymore and

"that time of waiting for the best players to show up on campus is over."

He added that there is "a lack somewhere in the system" and that "we (CIAU) don't sell our program well enough."

This "lack" of recruiting leads to a great number of excellent hockey players making a mass exit to US colleges. Whenever you watch or listen to an NHL game

you always hear how so and so came from the smallest town in Saskatchewan and that he received a hockey scholarship to an American college. Translation: whoever the player was, he wasn't considered good enough by

junior clubs or Canadian colleges to make him stay or was offered a scholarship by an American university first. Need another translation? Canadian colleges don't

supply or are not supplied with enough 'scholarship' funds to keep 16 and 17 year old players in Canada.

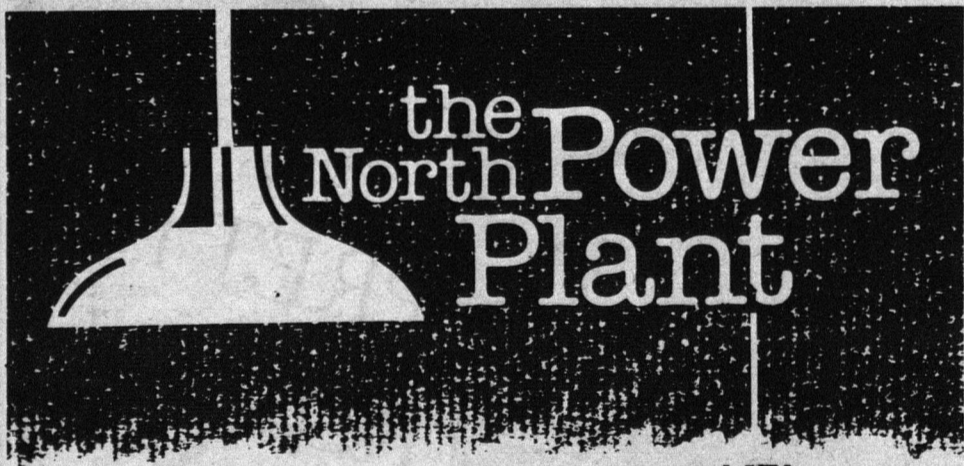
While this poor recruiting may be partly responsible for the 'export of our young players', Perron maintains that it happens because of the way hockey in Canada is structured.

"Canadian hockey is built towards junior hockey and



photo Bill Inglee

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