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CANADA

TODAY / D'AUJOURD'HUI

"The National Film Board and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation are the shapers of Canadian identity. Those agencies are as important in this century for tying the nation together as the railway was in the last century." JOHN GRIERSON

The National Film Board



Motion pictures on small screens or large, is the peculiar medium of the 20th Century. Institutions, and nations, which came together in the past find it difficult to adapt to the graphic fact rather than the written word. Canada is a nation which is still coming together. It has used and to some degree has pioneered in the use of film to tell itself and others what it is trying to do.

In this issue, *Canada Today/D'Aujourd'hui* examines the storied if brief past, the present, and the probable or improbable future. To a degree, all three eras bear the mark of one man who was a Canadian though not by birth, John Grierson, for whom an inadequate identifying description is that he invented the word "documentary" to describe nonfictional film exposition. Mr. Grierson was among other things a phrase maker, a Twentieth Century man whose thoughts were most often ahead of his time but whose words had the style and thunder of the Bible-quoting past.

"If you think that I do not feel that I have been in the business of conditioning the imagination of mankind, you're crazy. But then, every goddamn rabbi, every prophet and every priest before me has been in the business of conditioning the imagination of mankind. I derive my authority from Moses . . . I deny this miserable modern habit of to deride or to deny the right of the prophet or preacher. Masterminding is a valid activity of the human spirit and medicine men are worthy of their hire."

AN ANECDOTE AND A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF John Grierson

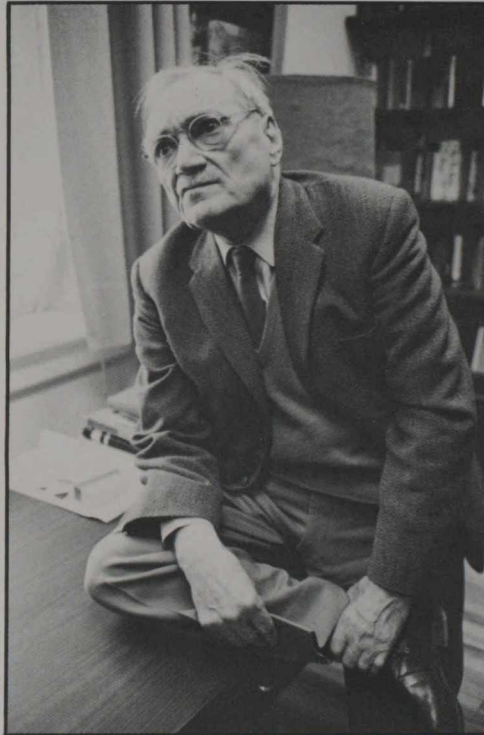
The most effective piece of anti-Nazi film propaganda in World War II seemed accidental — a captured Nazi newsreel showing Hitler doing a jig after the French had formally surrendered. It was a strange jig, one might say an insane jig or an obscene jig. Hitler childish and gleeful, jumping up and down in idiot delight.

It seems probable that Hitler never danced that jig — that John Grierson invented it by sophisticated manipulation, by taking the actual footage of Hitler walking and then speeding it up.

It is an interesting tale. If true it gives an interesting insight into the complex mind and motives of an evangelical genius. Grierson almost despised fiction — he and his films were concerned

from the beginning with reality. But he also despised cinema vérité.

He was born in Scotland in 1898. He went to the University of Glasgow and to the United States on a Rockefeller grant. In 1929 he made "Drifters" in England for the Empire Marketing Board. "Drifters" was the life of the herring fishermen in the North Sea. It was a new kind of film, a "documentary" as he called it, not unique — Robert Flaherty was making his own astounding films of isolated people — but with its own distinction. When austerity clipped the Empire Marketers, Grierson went to the General Post Office and made "Nightmail" and "Song of Ceylon." His reputation was now international, and as the Thirties were about to end and World War



II about to begin, Prime Minister Mackenzie King persuaded him to come to Canada and be the prime mover and the first Director of the National Film Board.

He remained until 1947 and he left his imperishable mark on Canada and on film making.

The quotations from the man, with this article, reveal a man of enormous ego and granite beliefs. He was an elitist. He did not suffer fools gladly. He was against the Establishment but hardly of the New Left.

And he has said, for example: "You may not tell lies to the public. Your duty to the public is more important than your duty to your wife and children not to say your

bloody conscience before God. You can tell private lies. That's o.k. That we do in fictional movies. But public lies may not be told."

But he did not believe that truth was a simple thing to tell; that one could simply point a camera and let it run.

"There is no such thing as truth until you've made it into a form. Truth is an interpretation, a perception. You've got moral laws to affect it, you've got social laws, you've got esthetic laws. What is truth isn't a nasty question at all — it's a question that forever is with you when you're a film maker. It's to make your truth as many-faceted and as deep, as various, as exciting, as possible that you are an artist."

Mr. Grierson died last February in Bath, England, at the age of seventy-three.

THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD began as a propaganda agency on the brink of World War II.

The House of Commons passed the National Film Act on May 2, 1939, creating a Board to ". . . initiate and promote the production and distribution of films in the national interest . . . to interpret Canada to Canadians and to other nations . . ."

The Board was built on the foundation of John Grierson, who had successfully created two government film boards in England. He was all his life a contradiction, a bureaucrat who served governments well by doing only what he, not necessarily they, wanted to do.

By 1940, the NFB had a staff of ten. Its companion agency, the Motion Picture Bureau, which had had a thin existence since 1914, made actual films with a full-time staff of twenty-nine. Together they produced training films for the armed forces, promoting films to sell war bonds, and explanatory films telling people why gasoline and meats and other things were in short supply.

The NFB also made two film propaganda series: "Canada Carries On" emerged in 1941, and one of the series, "Churchill's Island," won Hollywood's Academy Award. A series of shorts, "World in Action," was introduced in 1942 — it dealt with global strategy and Canada's real if modest role. These films, the product of a time when even to the sophisticated, some truths seemed absolute, were in the NFB's own later phrase "humble and honest." The words are not idle. Humble, in terms of technical facilities and production costs, they certainly were. They reflected Grierson's evangelical belief that facts, in Norman McLaren, in "Opening Speech."

the hands of artists, speak for themselves. Neither lilies nor the lives of soldiers should be gilded.

One short, "War Clouds in the Pacific," was released ten days before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and it not surprisingly became the first NFB film to be shown in U.S. theaters.

To show its films in the isolated villages, the NFB set up thirty rural circuits, each with a score of screening points. These were followed shortly by "industrial" circuits and National Trade Union circuits. Films were also distributed through regional libraries often attached to university extension departments and other public or semi-public institutions. This was most important. If Canada was to show itself to Canadians in film, it had to create the windows as well as the pictures.

By 1945 the NFB had a staff of 739.

It would, shortly, not include John Grierson. The Gutzenko spy case broke in Ottawa. A secretary in Grierson's office was found to have been a courier for the spy ring. Grierson had over the years won some enemies in fairly high places who were not reluctant to use the secretary's treason to attack the boss' reputation. Grierson resigned and left Canada under a cloud no bigger than a small man's envy. He became Director of Mass Communications and Public Information for UNESCO in Paris and, later, Film Controller for Britain's Central Office of Information. The NFB sailed on. Someone has since described the Board as a rudderless ship afloat in a sea of talent, but that is more fanciful than true. Grierson, the original rudder, was succeeded by men of sufficient strength to keep it steady on its imaginative courses.



"I'll tell you what I'm really worried about. The current explosion of students across the world. It's a very genuine and big thing but it doesn't look like it is finding a single body of discipline. There are so many aspects to it, so many self-contradictory approaches in it that I greatly fear that some of its values will be lost."



"Chaplain is more than a king, he is much nearer the spirits. He is an abstraction. A king is an abstraction up to a point, but a clown is an abstraction beyond that point. He gets near to being a god. A true clown is really as far as you can go in abstracting the figure of life."

It retained much of its wartime strength, including one of Grierson's most important recruits, Norman McLaren, and it acquired excellent production facilities in Montreal's suburb, Ville de St. Laurent. It kept its self confidence, an essential, since it would never be without its enemies.

WHEN its enabling Act first passed Parliament, it was described by one critic as "that wretched bill." The wretched bill gave it a license to do practically anything which could be put on film and which would "interpret" Canada. It left the Board with the ability to change and to respond to change.

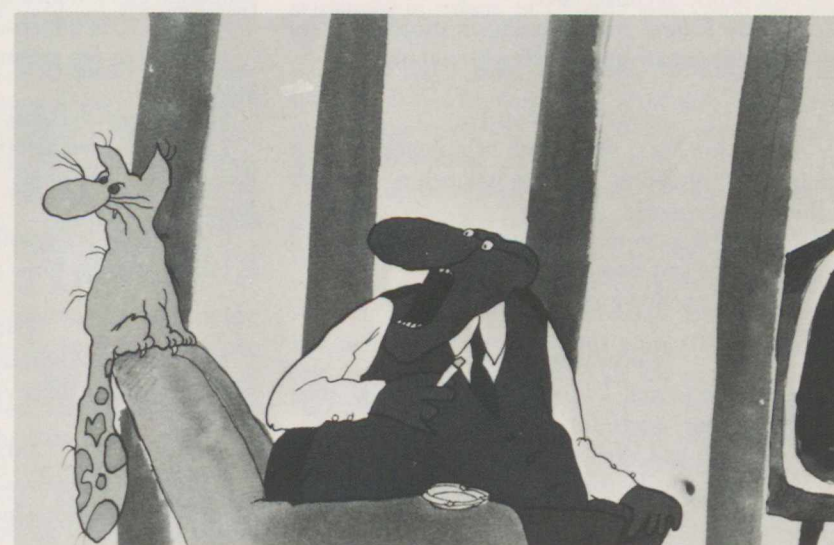
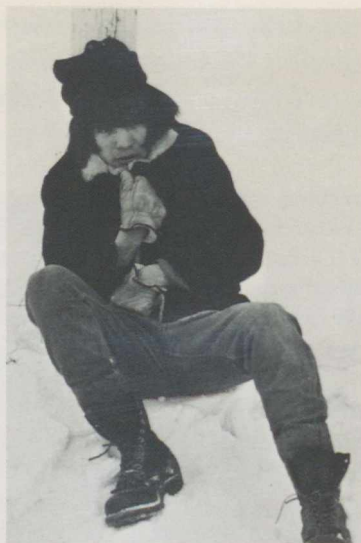
It meant that Norman McLaren, for example, could do things with film which were not authorized, nor precluded, by a book of detailed regulations on ship steering.

McLaren, an art student in the Thirties in Scotland, came first to Grierson and then to Canada, inventing then and now, techniques for creating imaginative films without cameras. The images, to put it briefly, are painted or scratched directly on the film and tied to a sound track, usually of music. In "Begone Dull Care," for example, Canadian jazz pianist Oscar Peterson plays slow blues as part of a fantasy of falling leaves and silver icicles.

Left, "Nobody Waved Goodbye"; below, Labyrinth at the Expo.



Below, "Sad Song of Yellow Skin"; right, "Cold Journey"; center, "Mon Oncle Antoine"; far right, "Where There's Smoke"; below, "Atonement"; below right, "Hot Stuff."



Don Owen, a director, went to his home town, Toronto, to do a half-hour documentary on tough teenagers wearing leather jackets. He made instead, without consulting the home office, a long feature called "Nobody Waved Goodbye" about a confused youth without a leather jacket who dropped out or tried to drop out of society. "Nobody Waved Goodbye" received moderate acclaim at home and thunderous applause abroad. The New York International Film Festival said it was the "freshest film of the year — rarely has such a sense of truth come over in a film about teenagers."

The NFB product which attracted the most attention was perhaps Labyrinth at the Expo exhibition in 1967 in Montreal. Labyrinth was housed in a windowless concrete building with five levels of balconies. In the first of three chambers the visitor saw fourteen-minute, multiple-image colour film on an up-ended Cinerama screen while looking simultaneously at a vast image projected on a flat screen lying forty feet

below. In a second chamber, first dark then aglow with starry lights, in which strange sounds came from all sides, the visitor was reflected in mirrored walls. In the third, he sat before a cruciform of five large screens and saw a series of pictures of man seeking his way in various cultures over the world.

AFTER EXPO the NFB came on something like hard times. Guy Roberge resigned as Board Chairman in 1966, and for sixteen months it was without a head.

Hugo McPherson, a professor, was named to the job in 1967, and when he took over, morale at NFB was very low. With his arrival new plans began to develop, including an expansion in educational TV and research into new distribution and exhibition programs. Then austerity hit and the NFB budget was frozen. Between 1969 and 1971 the NFB laid off over a hundred film makers and its English-language production fell below the 1964-65 level.

At the same troubled time, new and potent rivals appeared. CBC was producing more features than the NFB, and the Government established the Canadian Film Development Corporation to promote feature film work. (See CANADA TODAY/D'AUJOURD'HUI, VOLUME I, NUMBER THREE.) There was among many government officials a feeling that the NFB should get out of feature films altogether and devote itself to producing utility films for other agencies.

Further there was an established conflict between the NFB and CBC — the Broadcasting Corporation was required to carry sixty per cent specifically Canadian-produced material in prime time, and while it was willing to show NFB films, the NFB was unwilling that they be shown if interrupted by commercial breaks.

Sydney Newman was appointed Government Film Commissioner in August, 1970. The conflicts have not yet been fully resolved, but resolutions seem to be in the making. The NFB agreed to commercial interruptions on CBC. A detailed study

was undertaken and all of the NFB's purposes and practices were re-evaluated, some reorganization took place and plans were made. A decision was made to appeal to and excite mass audiences. The Board made a large library of films available for conversion to electronic video recording cartridges to be used on closed circuit TV sets.

The closing months of 1971 reflected the revitalization of the Board. The last five produced an outburst of productivity that made up for the first seven and the Board ended the year with one of the largest carry-in (films shot but not yet edited) in its history.

[SOME RECENT N.F.B. PRODUCTIONS]

ENGLISH LANGUAGE

[FEATURE]

A Matter of Fat, the true-life ordeal of a 330-pound man who starves himself to lose 150 pounds.

Cold Journey, a young Indian's attempt to re-

late his home life on the reservation to the pressures of the white man's school.

[THEATRICAL SHORTS]

Don't Knock the Ox, the Maritime rural exhibition and the ox pull main event.

Pillar of Wisdom, the initiation rites at a Canadian university.

A Rosewood Daydream, folkrock singers singing in old folks homes in Newfoundland.

Temples of Time, the Rockies in all seasons as symbols of man and his environment.

[TELEVISION FILMS]

Sad Song of Yellow Skin, winner of the Robert Flaherty Award in England. Attempts by people of the West to understand the Vietnamese.

Atonement, Canadian wilderness and the people who work to conserve it.

A Little Fellow from Gambo, a profile of Premier Joseph Smallwood of Newfoundland.

[EXPERIMENTAL]

A Film for Max, the search of a modern urban couple to re-define their relationship to each other and the world.

N-Zone, free-form montage of a young man's past, present and possible future.

Pandora, poetic images of married love.

[ANIMATED FILMS]

Best Friends and *Where There's Smoke*, anti-smoking films made for the Department of National Health and Welfare.

Hot Stuff, made for the Dominion Fire Commissioner.

Left, "Esquimaux"; right, "A Film for Max".

In a Nutshell, made for the Canadian International Development Agency.

Propaganda Message, made for Information Canada.

FRENCH LANGUAGE

[DOCUMENTAIRE]

Faut-il se couper l'oreille?, artistes québécois discutent l'intégration des arts.

Fistule broncho-oesophagienne congénitale chez un adulte, description d'une nouvelle méthode d'opération chirurgicale.

Esquimaux, une famille esquimaude d'un foyer exceptionnel.

Notes sur la contestation, révoltes d'étudiants au Mexique, aux Etats-Unis, en France, et au Canada.

Heureux comme un poisson dans l'eau, le problème de la pollution de l'environnement.

If Not . . ., le bilinguisme est-il possible?

Motoneige, les motoneiges — symboles du pouvoir.

Ski de fond, rythmes des skis.

Les Philharmonistes, comment les ouvriers d'une usine d'orgues ont découvert la vie de loisir.

Ordinateur, les possibilités de l'ordinateur dans la production des films animés.

[FICTION]

Mon Oncle Antoine, un adolescent avec une grande curiosité de la vie découvre le sexe.

[ANIMATION]

Notions élémentaires de génétique, tout ce qu'on doit savoir de la loi génétique de Mendel.



On Getting Out of Jail in Canada

[NEW PAROLE PRACTICES ARE THE MOST SWEEPING CHANGES BEING MADE IN CANADA'S PRISON SYSTEM]

Canada has some 22,000 prisoners in Federal and Provincial penitentiaries. About one million Canadians have criminal records. At the moment over 7,000 are on parole.

Some Canadians long felt that the system was too harsh, the sentences too long, the paroles too few.

In the words of the Windsor Star, "the emphasis . . . was overly punitive and this country was one of the most backward in the Western world in its parole practices."

In recent years — particularly in the last two — much has changed.

A determined effort has been made to humanize the institutions — prisoners may now write uncensored letters out, including letters of complaint to newspapers and Members of Parliament; drab uniforms have been replaced by reasonably modish clothes individually chosen; and, most impressively, prisoners at pilot projects are working at regular jobs, making regular wages. At William Head in British Columbia prisoners doing construction work on a new penitentiary building will receive \$1.75 an hour, pay for their own room and board, pay taxes, buy articles at the prison canteen and bank the balance.

The most sweeping, and controversial reforms, however, have involved the release of prisoners on parole. Last fall and spring Canadians across the land read with interest and often with heat of two specific cases, one involving the full paroles

of five young men who had kidnapped a Toronto woman for ransom and the granting of a fifty-hour "temporary absence" to a Montreal man convicted of murdering his wife.

The subject of parole is complex.

The reformation began in 1959 when the National Parole Board was formed and given "absolute discretion" over the granting of paroles. The Board was and is autonomous. Its philosophy has been expressed by its chairman, T. George Street, Q.C.: "There are far too many persons sentenced to prison in Canada who could be better dealt with in the community."

The Board's nine members, working out of Ottawa, travel in pairs and personally interview each parole applicant. It is now an awesome task, some 17,000 cases are heard yearly.

The rate of release has been accelerating for a decade and the overall results are impressive. The reformation of prisoners has proved difficult always. Most prisoners are recidivists — men and women who have been convicted and sentenced before and who will almost surely be convicted and sentenced again. A man on parole is still serving his sentence. The theory behind parole involves reformation only. A man who serves his full sentence and is then returned to society abruptly, without resources, is very likely to commit a crime. A man on parole is still under close supervision — in Canada he must report to his parole supervisor weekly and to the police once

Left, Parole Board Members Claude Bouchard and George Tremblay interview a prisoner at Le Clerc Institution. Right, a parole officer meets with a parolee for a counseling chat at a bus terminal restaurant.



each month — he is either employed, undergoing training or actively looking for work. He is being encouraged to adjust to society. Furthermore he is self-supporting and, consequently, he is costing the state relatively little. The cost of keeping a man in prison is \$10,500 a year; the cost of keeping him on parole is under \$1000.

Overall, the results have been impressive. By last fall the National Parole Board had granted 38,005 paroles of which 5,116 had been revoked or forfeited, a success rate of 86.6 per cent.

In addition to full paroles the Board also grants "day paroles," through which prisoners are released to work or take training outside the prison to which they return at night. In 1970 there were 698 day paroles; in 1971 there were 1,185. The failure rate has been minimal.

The recent history of full paroles has, however, been less encouraging. In 1970 there were 5,923

full paroles and some 1,004 violations, a rate of slightly less than seventeen per cent. In 1971 there were 4,965 releases and 1,509 violations, a rate of about thirty per cent.

Mr. Street said this spring that the rules for parole need to be tightened. "We may have reached the optimum number of inmates released in any one year who can benefit from full parole." Consequently, it can be seen that the Board cut back on paroles. To the end of July, 1971, there had been 2,977 paroles granted and in the same period this year the figure is 2,259 paroles.

The rising rate of forfeitures and revocations has attracted attention, but the most sensational cases have been far from the main run of either successes or failures.

The first, which can more accurately be termed controversial, involved the release of Ralph Cameron, 27, Peter Burns, 25, John Rogan, 32, Mich-

Iron bars make a prison worse. At Kingston's Prison for Women the old wing still has them, the new does not. A determined effort is being made to make all of the prisoners feel less removed from the world. Each has an individually furnished room, dresses in clothes of her own choice, and can have her hair set weekly and a social night out in town once a month. The women range in age from 19 to 65, and they are serving from two years to life for convictions that range from fraud to murder. The prison, built in the thirties, is still a forbidding sight, high walls of grey limestone and, since it holds all 100 of the Federal women prisoners (there are 7400 men scattered across the country), it is a maximum security institution. Director C. A. M. Edwards, who is called the Landlord by the inmates, has pioneered with a couple of experimental programs of far greater freedom. Six women live and work in Kingston, sharing a dormitory much like a sorority house and two women live in foster homes. Sixty-three got Christmas vacations, from three to fifteen days, and only three failed to return on time. Edwards encourages outside contacts, particularly with males. There are monthly dances to which law students from nearby Queen's University are invited. The innovations are not universally approved: One guard said, "They had more respect for us in the old days, I'll tell you."



PHOTO: KEN ELLIOTT, CANADIAN MAGAZINE

ael Whiteside, 26, and Richard Yeowart, 28. They had served between twenty months and four years of sentences ranging from ten years to twelve years for the kidnapping of Mrs. Mary Nelles, a member of a wealthy Toronto family.

A sixth man, Gary Adamas, 28, the former boy friend of Mrs. Nelles and the ringleader in the \$200,000 kidnapping, was sentenced to fifteen years and will not be eligible for parole until this November.

Mr. Street said on the release of the first four men that "there is no chance of these men ever again becoming involved in a crime of this nature."

The released men are under the usual strict conditions of parole.

The releases brought much mail and many phone calls to the National Parole Board, a great deal of it critical. Andrew Therrien, one of the Board members said at the time "Maybe we made a mistake — I don't know. But the chances are on our side. We felt they were ready, but if they commit a crime we'll look foolish."

The other celebrated case involved a Montreal attorney named Yves Geoffroy who was convicted of strangling his wife and sentenced to life. Last fall he applied for a "temporary absence" to marry his mistress, Miss Carmen Parent, and, so his application said, provide a proper guardian for his three children. He was given a fifty-hour pass to do so. It was noted belatedly that by marrying Miss Parent he removed a potential witness against him, should he be given a new trial. After the marriage he and his bride fled

to Europe. They were recaptured in March.

The Geoffroy case occupied public attention for months and brought demands for an investigation into the circumstances. No evidence of wrongdoing was turned up, though there was at least one instance of carelessness in the investigation of statements made by Mr. Geoffroy in his application.

Solicitor General Jean-Pierre Goyer subsequently issued new and more rigorous procedures for the granting of "temporary absences." One new regulation provides that a prisoner's request to get married must henceforth be considered for the legal effect it may have if he is later retried.

As a result of the Geoffroy escape, Paul Faguy, Commissioner of Penitentiaries, instituted new guidelines for the granting of temporary absences and permissions to marry.

— Temporary absences will not be considered until at least six months have been served.

— They will not be considered for those serving life sentences, those who are habitual criminals or dangerous sex offenders and those known to be connected with organized crime, until after three years, and such leaves must then be approved by the Regional Director of Penitentiaries.

— Dangerous sexual offenders must have special clearances by psychiatrists.

— Reasons for granting temporary absences must be fully supported by documents and investigation reports.

— Requests to marry must be considered in terms of the legal implications by the Provincial Attorney General.



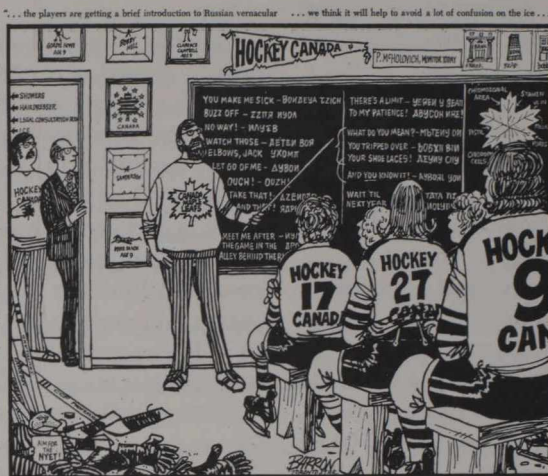
September Fever

This summer the fevered thoughts of Canadians were on Moscow in the fall.

The first Canadian-Russian hockey games began in September. At the end of the first four — in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg and Vancouver — the score was Russia, 2, Canada, 1, and one tied.

For a fortunate 2,700 the best or, at any rate, the most exciting was yet to come. They had signed up for a \$649 ten-day package which would take them to Moscow for the last four on Air Canada and Ilyushin jets.

Some 1,700 more had deposited certified checks with travel agencies on the slim hope that more room will turn up. The space shortage was not in the planes but in Moscow hotels and, more particularly, in the 14,000-capacity Moscow stadium. Five flights left from Toronto, four from Montreal



and one from Edmonton.

Hockey, which was once as peculiarly Canadian as Hudson Bay, has been played in the Olympics since 1920 and has become the rage in countries with plenty of ice. There are over six hundred rinks in Stockholm alone.

The Canadian players are in all instances from the National Hockey League by an agreement between the League and

Hockey Canada, the semi-governmental agency which arranged the games. Many fans had protested the exclusion of Bobby Hull — who is one of today's outstanding player — from the team. Hull who was with the Chicago Blackhawks in the NHL jumped to the new World Hockey League in June and will play with the Winnipeg Jets this season. The NHL insisted that all Canadian players be from the NHL or none.

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