

## Culture



# The (S)Pacific Effects of Sunday Morning Hockey: A Participant's Observation

David Turner

Volume 12, Number 1, 1992

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1081567ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1081567ar>

[See table of contents](#)

### Publisher(s)

Canadian Anthropology Society / Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie (CASCA), formerly/anciennement Canadian Ethnology Society / Société Canadienne d'Ethnologie

### ISSN

0229-009X (print)

2563-710X (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

### Cite this article

Turner, D. (1992). The (S)Pacific Effects of Sunday Morning Hockey: A Participant's Observation. *Culture*, 12(1), 77–85.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/1081567ar>

### Article abstract

This second commentary complements Dr. Tolvanen's perspective by creating a metaphor of contemporary Canadian political issues in the guise of an analysis of a Sunday Morning Hockey league.

Tous droits réservés © Canadian Anthropology Society / Société Canadienne d'Anthropologie (CASCA), formerly/anciennement Canadian Ethnology Society / Société Canadienne d'Ethnologie, 1992

This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

**Érudit**

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

## The (S)Pacific Effects of Sunday Morning Hockey: A Participant's Observation

David Turner

University of Toronto

Ce qui suit vient s'ajouter à la perspective présentée par Tolvanen dans le commentaire qui précède. Celui-ci crée une métaphore pour parler des questions politiques canadiennes contemporaines, soit l'analyse de sa ligue de hockey du dimanche matin.

*This second commentary complements Dr. Tolvanen's perspective by creating a metaphor of contemporary Canadian political issues in the guise of an analysis of a Sunday Morning Hockey league.*

### THREE GAMES TO TWO FOR THE GREEN: THE WAY WE PLAY<sup>1</sup>

(S)Pacific effects of hockey? You must be kidding, you say. Isn't hockey mayhem and violence, grown up boys playing with their toys. And you are right. That's Saturday night or NHL hockey. I'm thinking, though, of Sunday Morning Hockey. You know, *For years now, Bill and Greg and the lads have been getting together every Sunday Morning down at the Community Centre to engage in a little competition with the puck. We're 20 in all and, apart from Bill, Greg, Corky, Ryan, and a few others we're not very good. Some, though, were — like Gerry. But we have one saving grace — we try!*

It all started over a decade ago when a bunch of the lads from the Brown Shoe and the Catholic School decided they'd had enough of Town League competitive hockey and wanted a more civilized alternative. So they started Sunday Morning Hockey. We represent all walks of life, from factory workers to tradesmen, to professionals, teachers, businessmen, "pseudo's" (lads who have retired here on their ass-ets), and even the odd Professor. Half of us are Catholics and the other half Protestants or Indifferents. Right off, the Catholics have the upper hand. That's because they origi-

nally created the schedule. All games are played between 10 and 11:30 Sunday Morning or just after Morning Mass but during the Protestant services at 11. For the Protestants, then, it's either Church or Hockey. Obviously we chose Hockey. Actually there's little difference between the two, except that Hockey may be the more truly Christian institution.

Now you might wonder how dividing grown men up into two teams, putting lethal weapons in their hands and telling them to fight over a puck would have any other implications than mayhem and violence. Normally these would be the implications, but our game is different. You see we play with Divine guidance. Our game is played through two Divine Forms, the Red and the Green Sweaters. It's the sweaters that "compete", not the players inside them. Every week the Red Sweaters line up for the face-off in the zone to the west, the Green Sweaters in the Zone to the east. Then the puck is dropped and the Sweaters play until one team of them gets five goals. Then the Sweaters change ends but leave their goalies where they are and we play again. And if one Sweater starts winning too many games the Sweaters temporarily change some of the players around inside them, one from Green to a Red, one from Red to a Green and it's back to three games to two for Red one week, three games to two for Green the next.

Of course there are other things at work here too. In our game we have also come to some "understandings" — no slapshots and no bodychecks. Nothing defeats the point of the game more than disabling injuries. It not only means that you can't play, but that you may not be able to work either. Loft a puck too high, particularly if there's someone between you and the goalie, take a run at somebody (except if it's Paul Brisebois), and you get a warning: *Watch it!* Do it again and you get an ultimatum: *Don't do it again!* A third time and you get a directive: *Don't you think you should be moving up to the Town League where your skills will be more appreciated?* The Town League is for players who haven't yet received Divine Grace — actually, I should have said "was". The Town League was recently disbanded because it was getting a bit too rough, but then regrouped as the "Gentlemen's League" with understandings similar to our own. In between us and the Gentlemen's League is the "Geritol League" for those who are unable to get into Sunday Morning Hockey.

I won't say it's impossible to get into Sunday Morning Hockey but the spares' list currently outnumbers the player on both teams. That's because

we keep on adding new applicants each year without any vacancies appearing. They have to settle for the odd game here and there if one of us has to be away. Considering that we are training our children to succeed us in the future, the situation doesn't look like easing up for at least a generation or two. Some of the spares are taking the hint and moving to found new games of their own. Occasionally, however, someone from Sunday Morning does "die" of old age and a position opens up. It's then we bring in someone from the spares list for a trial period to see if our judgement was right and he really is a candidate for conversion.

Successfully curb your excesses out there on the ice and you're honoured with an epithet. Me? I'm *The Hacker*, which is just an affectionate way of saying "Don't". In the 10 years I've played, there's only been one serious injury, Peter Whitehead, who forgot to stop skating after taking a shot on the net when he broke in all alone on the goalie. Crashed into the boards and separated his shoulder. The only call to higher places came when this one lad arrived at the game slightly inebriated (on a Sunday morning) and caught someone with a puck around the eye. The reason we knew he was inebriated was because he drove to the rink in full equipment and wearing his skates. Sure what he did was an accident, but one that could reoccur with debilitating regularity under the circumstances. But even here, the lad realized this and retired himself. The only excesses we're reluctant to curb were those of Bob Thomas when he was manager of the rink. Cold showers and a freezing dressing room were not our idea of a good time after the game. But now that he's switched jobs we can clear up a few misunderstandings.

The job of the better players in Sunday morning hockey is to keep the game moving and the understandings in mind, all the while improving the standard of play, particularly amongst lesser lights like myself. Before we were called to Sunday Morning hockey few of us had played anything more than river hockey down on the Tay when we were kids. Maybe a year or two of Pee-Wee but that was it. The better players, then, have their work cut out for them. First step is to make us look good; then, once we get the hang of it, to make us actually be good of our own accord. They start by putting us in the position we are best at regardless of whether anyone else on the team is better at that position. Then, once in position, a perfect pass when by some gross error of misjudgment you find yourself parked all alone in front of the net can do wonders for your confidence — in

my case if the pass is perfect and the goaltender is out of position (and it isn't Oscar Cordick). What I learned over time and repeated experience was that the reason I was all alone out there was because Bill Doyle had taken the play where he wanted it to go. Now I know where to be when he's doing it. I also know what it means to be able to take the play where you want it to go even if I can't do it myself. This breeds respect.

You might think that this would lead to a situation where the poorer players all got better, but the better players stayed the same, or even got worse from lack of competition. Not so. Without the mindless violence to inhibit their play they can concentrate on perfecting their passes, their stick handling skills and play-making techniques. Come to think of it, isn't this what hockey's supposed to be all about?

With the better players controlling the flow of the game, and if we all keep our understandings constantly in mind, it's not too difficult to have it come out three games to two for Green one week and the other way around the next. Things only start getting complicated when some of the poorer players like myself or Ronnie Dickson start improving — like me learning how to shift to the right rather than the left to get around Jim Farrell; like Ronnie learning how to skate. Then we start interfering with the play — with the ability of the better players to control its flow. Crisis comes when the better players have to impress themselves on the game too much in order to be able to maintain the balance of wins and losses, or when the rest of us become so enamoured with our new-found abilities that we forget about the understandings. It's then that some of the Sweaters have to change bodies.

It's amazing what a change of team-mates can do to what you thought were your own newly-developed individual skills. It takes even the best of players time to adjust to a new set of gross inadequacies, and until they do to yours, you look positively atrocious. The experience is usually enough to curb your enthusiasm and it's back to three games to two for Red one week....

I should also add that by the last Sunday of the season everything is always *all even up to this point* and it *all boils down to one last Sunday morning series*. That series always ends in a tie, that is, one game for the Red, one game for the Green with the third game tied as the clock runs out. I don't know how we do it because none of it is conscious, but we do. I have

a sneaking suspicion that Bill on the Red and Greg on the Green don't always keep proper track of the score.

As you must have realized by now, our game is only for the discriminating in taste. If you're watching from the sidelines you'll sense a certain monotony. No one seems to look all that good, and no one all that bad. The play flows up and down the ice without a sense of urgency. But these are players who know each other's moves instinctively. If you're really observant, you might notice the half dozen truly great plays a game it takes to keep it all working this way. In principle, if not in level of execution, it's not that different from Team Canada versus the Russians.

The game, of course, has altered somewhat since its inception. We first began without goalies. Then, it was five games to three for Green one week, five games to three for Red the next. Goalies stepped up the pace a bit and also led us to wear some basic equipment — like shin pads and cups. Hoisting was permitted but not slapshots. As the all-round level of ability improved, the pace stepped up some more. Some of the players began wearing proper pants and helmets, though it wasn't really necessary. Others continued the old way. Then players began to form an attachment to their Sweaters, so much so that even when a player exchanged his for the other side's he still thought of himself (and was thought of by others) as, say, a Red player playing for the Green team. Donnie Currie switched his to Green seven years ago and he's still considered "really one of us".

So our game isn't really competitive, and it isn't really cooperative. I'll let Jimmy Buker explain what it is: our line was sitting on the bench after a shift with the score 4 to 1 for Green. We had already lost the first game 5 to 0. Jimmy was trying to exhort us to better things. *I don't mean we should try to be more competitive*, he explained. *I mean we should try to keep up our end of the game*. The level of our play was necessary to the level of theirs. If ours deteriorated, eventually theirs would too.

Not that some of us don't or can't compete when we have to. When they get together a team to play the Montréal Canadiens Old Timers or the Flying Fathers come in for a visit, it's only the best among us who go out to meet them. We can play according to the outside world's standards if we have to, but not if we don't have to. In between the "outside world" and Sunday Morning Hockey are the Grey Wings, our tournament team. Yes, there are people "out there" in other arenas who have come to the same under-

standings as ourselves even if they do still think it's important to win more times than to lose. The Grey Wings, by losing more times than they win at these events, hope by example to eventually cure their opponents of this malady.

Actually, the main point of Sunday Morning Hockey is to get back to the dressing room for a beer after the game. The most popular player on either team for a long time was Jim Farrell. This was because he brought the '50. Not that everyone liked '50, but everyone liked its being brought. If he will bring it, he can choose it. That's why Jim always looked so good out on the ice — we were always coughing up the puck to him and steering clear of his rushes, just to make sure he'd come back every week.

To give you some indication of how important the dressing room is, one week we learned that our ice time the following Sunday would be preempted by a figure skating competition. *Well, then, would you book the dressing room for us instead?*, shot back one of the lads.

The dressing room's only place you're going to bump into somebody from the Hoof and Boot (Brown Shoe), the Trash and Can (Canadian Tire), the High School or wherever unless you're directly connected to them as a friend or a relative. And if you don't bump into them, just how are you going to find out who's been doing what to whom around town and in the country all week?

The problem at this point is that I really can't let you in past the dressing room door. Too revealing. Would be a breach of trust. Unless, of course, it just involved stories about me. Perhaps in that case a little peek wouldn't hurt.

If switching Sweaters can undermine your confidence, the dressing room can kill it altogether. I'm a Professor, right? So how can I be so dumb? Did I really believe in all seriousness that there was nothing to worry about what with me in Toronto all week and my wife down here all by herself?

*Eh, Dave, says Ron Knowingly. I was out your way last Wednesday and thought about dropping by for a visit.*

*Oh, really, I reply naively. I wasn't there. I was in Toronto.*

*Yes, I know, says Ron to a chorus of guffaws around the room. Next time it was "out your way skiing", then, "downtown" until finally I got the message.*

Truth is, it was peculiar my leaving my wife here while I was in Toronto. Sooner or later something was bound to happen. If not to her then to me. But it wasn't really her they were worried about. She was here. I was there. Removed from the constraints of Perth I — like them — would be capable of almost anything, or at least so we imagine. And if I was, it would ruin everything — here.

Once I began joking about it myself the comments ceased. I was now at least aware of the problem.

One Sunday, Jim and Ron were all agog about their recent trip to Toronto or the Little Apple (or Big Lemon, depending on your taste). They were going on about inadvertently stumbling into a gay bar and not being sure whether they's get out unscathed, about the bright lights and very tall buildings when Greg McNally piped up, *Is that how come you got sunburned? Sunburned? Yes, on the roof of your mouth.*

The image of two country bumpkins walking about the big city, their mouths agape at the sight of skyscrapers was too vivid for any of us to ignore. It's quite a sight seeing 18 grown men in various stages of undress rolling on the floor and crying with laughter. But we were. Stopped the conversation dead for half-an-hour. But then if a week later Ron wasn't coming back with,

*No need for me to go south this winter. Already got my tan in Toronto.*

But you just don't come out with this to someone who hasn't been there with you before. Oops, I've gone and done it — let you in on something that didn't have me as its object. Sorry Ron and Jim, but Greg's to blame.

I can, however, talk about what we don't talk about and that's sex (in the sense of who's doing what to whom), religion (in the sense of passing judgement on any version of it), and politics (in any sense at all). No one is going to change anyone's mind on any of these subjects in the space of a conversation anyway, and you never know who might be connected to whom outside the dressing room, so why bring them up? Mere mention is likely to lead to a severing of connections. You can add "insult" to "injury" on our list of understandings. After all, we get along despite our various opinions of Liberals, of whether it's the Catholics and not the Protestants who are going straight to hell, or of the evils of American investment:

*At least you could have waited until he left the room before bringing it up! Shouldn't you be moving up a notch or two to the Town League?*

I've only seen this understanding breached twice, and since both instances involved me, I can tell you about it. They both involved a newcomer to Town through the Brown Shoe connection.

Me and this other fellow, well, our dads don't get along all that well. In fact, they think they're enemies; and by Perth standards I suppose they are (they'd be mere rivals in Toronto). It's common knowledge. Both of us are aware of the problem, but we don't let it interfere with our own relationship. We both play for the Red team — or at least did. Well one Sunday Fred sits down and opens up a beer, turns to me with Harry present and says,

*Norm and Joe been at it again this week, I hear.*

Well you could have heard a pin drop on Gore Street, as the saying goes.

Then Greg pipes up with something about Jimmy Buker letting one go at 90 miles an hour but since it hadn't left the ice we really couldn't call it a slapshot and things went elsewhere from there. Fred got the message. It almost never happened again.

More recently, we had just come off the ice after a shift. Fred sits down beside one of the teachers from the Separate School and says, right out of the blue,

*I don't agree with the idea of extending separate school funding. There should be just one public school system. We should all be the same.*

Well, we're not, replied the tight-lipped teacher as he headed over the boards and onto the ice, giving us an immediate man advantage.

Fred, it seems, had spend too much time in the States.

## **JUST A GAME, RIGHT?**

Sunday Morning Hockey is just a game, right? Just a bunch of the lads getting together every week for a bit of fun. Well, yes and no. If you look more closely you'll see there's a lot more going on here. In the first place, there's no referee. Referees would be there to prevent the violence implicit in the very nature of the game from getting out of hand. Refereed hockey is crisis-management hockey. In our game we're beyond crisis-management to preven-

tion. Yet, as I've said, we're two teams competing at high speeds in narrow confines. How do you account for this? As I said, I think it has a lot to do with the Sweaters.

"Red" and "Green" may be pitted against one another as two Sweaters of different colours but the players inside the Sweaters aren't opposed because the Sweaters keep shifting them about, one in the other. This is the Green goalie going over to the Red team and the Red goalie going over to the Green after every game; it is the Red player on temporary loan to the Green team and vice versa to correct any imbalances. When one of us or a team of us moves, then, it's not to be incorporated as a Red player into Green or a Green player into Red. It's rather to be hosted or federated as a Red player temporarily on loan to the Green Team and vice versa. Looked at another way, it's a Red player from the Red zone to the east temporarily visiting the Green players and the zone to the west to help them out.

In all cases the same principle is at work: part of the one side is placed in the other and vice versa without loss of integrity - - of Sweater — of either. Consequently, to destroy "them" would be to destroy a part of ourselves.

Given these factors, then, we don't defend as aggressively as we might when they come in over our blue line to "attack" us in our Red defensive zone; we don't attack them as aggressively as we might when we come over their blue line to "attack" them in their Green defensive zone. In N.H.L. hockey, by contrast, the aim of the game is to expand one's zone into the other's — literally blanket it with players until you score a goal. Hence their defensive zone is our offensive zone.

In Sunday Morning Hockey, since we're not defending or attacking, again in contrast to N.H.L. hockey, gone is the need for all that protective equipment. Technological change becomes unnecessary. Of course we have to take some precautions against "chance", hence shin pads and cups. As I said, you can't really say we're co-operating and we're not competing either. We're rather "accommodating", one to the other. The result is three games to two for Green one week, three games to two for Red the next, all tied at the end of the season.

Of course, there are other moderating factors at work as well: the fact that we've come to know each other so well over the years, the fact that we come from the same community. But then the same could

be said of players in the Town League (now Gentleman's league) and Geritol yet their play is far more chippy than ours. The players here also change sweaters but it's on a yearly basis. That is, each player is incorporated into a new team each season. The relation between the teams as competing entities thus remains the same. In their case, local ties account for why their game is merely chippy and not violent. Still, they require referees. Ours, by contrast, requires neither referees nor prior local ties. Ours is the appropriate game for keeping the peace between friends and establishing it between strangers — even enemies.

Consider the range of differences we, as players and spares, in fact represent. These are nothing if not fundamental, namely differences of religion, ethnicity and class. I am referring, of course, to the fact that we are Protestants and Catholics or Indifferents, Scotch/English and Irish in background (it's the community that's narrow in this respect, not us), owners and workers and public servants and various subdivisions of these differences. In fact, about the only major difference we don't contain is between male and female. That's because the women choose to separate out into a different / game on their own, which is just as well because we're not certain that even our Sweaters can handle such an extreme incompatibility as this one. Nevertheless they'd be welcome to come on to our spares' list and wait for a Sweater to become vacant just like anyone else.

Now it's not that these differences have been eradicated or eliminated before they come to the game. That episode concerning the Separate School funding well illustrates that. The differences are still there and clung to tenaciously. It's just that we've found a way to transcend them while leaving them more or less intact. But now they're not extreme.

There's also a peculiar mode of thought going on in our game. When trouble does look like brewing, such as when Paul Brisebois starts forgetting he really is just a Green player on temporary loan to the Red team (getting more temporary all the time) and begins becoming more and more attached to his new Sweater, we "back off". What thought is doing is temporarily removing the Sweaters and the player-loans between them to see what really lies below the surface. And when it discovers that all hell will break loose without them, it sends out the message "separate and withdraw". It's a message that in practical terms has a certain survival value. We avoid Brisey even if he doesn't know enough to avoid us. This is

a mode of thought appropriate to a human environment of institutionally, Sweater-mediated, ties such as our game represents.

Our accomplishment is reflected in the logo chosen to symbolize Sunday Morning Hockey on our Sweaters, two crossed sticks separating the letters SM from HL (Sunday Morning Hockey League) enclosing a segment of the sun. Just a picture, right? Well, yes and no. It's two lines enclosing part of a circle. Line is the most efficient, elegant way of indicating boundary, two sidedness, as well as exclusive association with the same boundary over time (as in passing your boundary, your Sweater, from father to children). Circle, by contrast, expresses unity, gravitation towards a centre, pent-up energy waiting to explode, incorporation as "my team" as opposed to "your team". The Perth Blue Wings' logo (the Blue Wings are our Junior B team) is a wheel — a circle — with wings extending from either side. It's an adaptation of the Detroit Red Wings logo, a "flying wheel".

Junior B hockey, like Junior A and N.H.L. hockey, is competitive, crisis-management, refereed, hockey which pits one team against another in a struggle to the finish, the finish being to score more goals than the other team in a fixed period of time. Here the sweaters are glued to the bodies of the players who wear them which are in turn glued to the zones they defend. The players move into their opponent's zone with the aim of taking it over and establishing themselves there until they score a goal. Then they go home and regroup for the next assault. The object of this game is to win at all costs. The cost is periodic outbursts of violence and oblivion for all those who don't make it from Junior B through Junior A and the minor pros to the N.H.L. The rewards are million-dollar contracts for the few who do make it and millions more for the people who own the players, namely the owners of the team. As I said, the essential nature of this game is expressed in their team logos.

The Detroit Red Wings have the "flying wheel". The Boston Bruins simply have a wheel. "Flying" Philadelphia and St. Louis' Blues "racing musical note" are variations. So is Calgary's "flame". The Winnipeg Jets' circle and Jets is the same form. Then there's the circles that enclose team initials or team emblems: the New York Islanders, the New Jersey Devils, the Edmonton Oilers and even the Montréal Canadiens — the C enclosing H arrangement. Buffalo is a circle enclosing two crossed lines. The new

Tampa Bay Lightning's logo is a bolt of same bisecting a circle, the Ottawa Senators' is an encircled Roman Legionnaire being propelled forward through space. And there's no ambiguity about the predatory tendencies of San Jose's encircled "shark".

Emblems that can't be interpreted along these lines are Chicago's "Blackhawk", Toronto's "Maple Leaf", the L.A. "King's Crown", Pittsburgh's "Penguin", Hartford's "Whaler", Minnesota's "North Star". A design moving toward a simple letter representation is Québec's Nordique. Most straightforward as representations are Washington's Capitals and New York's Rangers.

For a time Vancouver's sweaters were emblazoned with a huge multi-coloured V — a California psychologist's idea of an energizing force. Considering Vancouver's usual position in the standings, they would have been better advised to reshape the old oblong logo into a circle and v-ifying the hockey stick it enclosed. Eventually the V was dropped and replaced by a circle with "Canucks" rushing across it. Predictably, they're now doing much better.

Something else is revealed by an emblem-analysis, namely a tension between continentalist and nationalist outlooks within the league. First, divide N.H.L. teams up on a national basis into Canadian-based and American-based and then subtract the teams that entered from the old World Hockey Association (W.H.A.). On the Canadian side this leaves Montréal, Toronto and Vancouver, that is, the Canadiens, the Maple Leafs and the Canucks. What we have here is an assertion of national identity in what is a predominantly trans-national league. The American team emblems make the same assertion but in a very different way.

If we examine the logos of their teams considered as a whole, including some of those now defunct, we gain the impression of a league which extends north to the frozen climes of Pittsburgh and Minnesota (Penguins and North Stars, though "Bruins" carries the same implication), stretching from the Atlantic (Whalers) to the Pacific (the old San Diego Gulls and now the San Jose Sharks), bordered on the south formerly by Atlanta (the old Flames) and by the Tampa Bay Lightning (likewise carrying the implication of heat). A mountain range completes the impression. This is the "Rockies" emblazoned on the jerseys of the now-extinct Colorado team. This nation, of course, has its Capitol in Washington.

The American logos, then, give the distinct impression that this is a National American Hockey League extending to the limits of the United States. Canada isn't so much incorporated into this scheme as simply ignored. Ottawa's "Senators", if they do not reinforce, at least they don't undermine this impression. The W.H.A. team symbols were basically regional as befitted a league whose very name dissolved national boundaries into a global whole intent on incorporating teams from Europe.

In Sunday Morning Hockey, by contrast, line compartmentalizes or subdues circle and situates it as one in a block of four grouped into two. That's separation into interdependence — the way we play. Not that there's anything wrong with N.H.L. hockey as such. I enjoy watching it myself. It's only when it becomes a model for life outside the arena that we have a problem. Which means, today, we have a problem.

## SUMMARY

$1 + 1 = \text{II}$

Sunday Morning Hockey = Sweater/body-zone transcendence; part-of-one-in-the-other relationship; win-win situation; mutual accommodation; conflict prevention to maintain permanent peace

$1 + 1 = 2$

N.H.L. Hockey = sweater/body-zone identity; one-against-the-other-up-to-a-point relationship; win-lose situation; mutual frustration; crisis-management to maintain temporary peace

$1 + 1 = 1, 1/1 \text{ or } 0 =$

Unrefereed N.H.L. hockey = no sweaters; one-against-the-other-to-the-end relationship; lose-lose situation; mutually assured destruction (M.A.D.) and annihilation

The difference between Sunday Morning and other brands of hockey is that it absolutely refuses to allow opposition to emerge. It does so by creating mutual exclusiveness on one level, the Sweaters, and mutual interdependence on another, the "matter" inside the Sweaters. Interdependence is possible



because the Sweaters are “transcendent” in the sense that you can take them away with you while leaving them behind — as in the Red goalie on the Green team and vice versa every other game, as in a Red player on temporary loan to the Green team or vice versa when things start to get imbalanced (and as in my Sweater being “retired” while I was away in Australia), as in you leaving your zone behind while you make a temporary visit to the other’s.

The principle at work here is part-of-one-in-the-other-and-vice-versa-without-loss-of-integrity-of-either relationship. As a result of the operation of this principle, the violence that characterizes Saturday night hockey never breaks out. To do harm to “them” on the “other side”, is to do harm to a part of oneself. As the very prospect of violence we “back off”. A mode of thought peculiar to our game reinforces this, an “economic” accommodation follows from it. We allow each to develop at the position he or she is suited for whether or not we are better at it ourselves. This is the other sense in which our Sweaters are “transcendent”; they permit the flow of “matter” between them in the way of skills and skilled personnel. Indeed the Sweaters actively expel it, one to the other.

The benefit of playing hockey this way, the Sunday Morning Way, is long term peace and order, but at the cost of short-term individual and collective self-gratification, not to mention arrested technological development. In this, Sunday Morning Hockey is an almost perfect replica of a society that achieved this state of affairs on a continent-wide basis for some thousands of years, namely Australian Aboriginal culture. There, though, the Sweaters were “Promised Lands”, the material parts-of-one-in-the-other between them were resources bounded exclusively for the purpose, as well as men and women on marriage, ceremonial goods and symbols<sup>2</sup>.

In our culture the Sweaters might be political jurisdiction whether these be the Nation, the Province, the Municipality or the Person constituted by these jurisdictions. By jurisdictions I mean “spatially or otherwise bounded to afford control over what is within to those exclusively associated with the jurisdiction”. We are accustomed to thinking of jurisdiction as the right of those with it to control what is within, however, for one’s own use and enjoyment. However, in a Sunday Morning Hockey or Australian Aboriginal context, what is within your jurisdictional bounds is controlled for the benefit of

others outside, whether this be a skill, a skilled person, or a resource or asset of some other kind.

Set in a contemporary Canadian context, playing the Sunday Morning Way would be to see us separated into our respective jurisdictions, whether these be Provinces and/or Municipalities as citizens, each with his or her own particular skills and resources, each with their delegated representatives working out the basis of a material “part-of-one-in-the-other” interdependence between them. Insofar as “ethnicity” is bounded in this way, one’s ethnicity would not be for the benefit — the enrichment — of one’s ethnic enclave but for the benefit of those in other jurisdictions — other enclaves — elsewhere.

Set in a contemporary international context, playing the Sunday Morning Way would entail maintaining strict exclusiveness in citizenships between, say, Canadians and Americans, Canadians and Australians, Canadians and Brits, while allowing the controlled flow of “matter” between them, the one’s serving the interest of the other. It is important to note that neither Sunday Morning Hockey nor Australian Aboriginal culture recognizes or permits the existence of a Sweater in the singular, not even on the same team. Each Sweater on the same team is worn individually with its own numerical values. The Roman numerals we choose (X, II, IV and so on), are parallel and intersecting lines, expressing individuality yet implying relationship. It should be the same in the world outside the arena. That is, no State should exist in the singular at any level — World, National, Provincial or Municipal. A World, or any other level of State, should be nothing more than a forum for arranging “Sweater games” between member States at a lower level right down to the level of the Person. In a Sunday Morning World “two” would never (and could never) be reduced to “one” — not in the World as a whole, not within the Nation-State and not within the Provinces and Municipalities that make up the State. For that matter, nor could the Person be reduced to “one” for s/he would be constituted by his or her situation within these “twos”.

If this comparison is valid and if what we want is peace and order over economic development we should play life this the Sunday Morning Way; if, however, we want conflict and violence then we should keep going the Saturday night or worse way. The problem is that the first alternative is realized less from positive choice and more by negative recoil from the competitive destructiveness of a Saturday

night situation. The problem is that even if the real choices are set down, these are all too many benefiting from life the Saturday night or worse way to voluntarily opt for the more peaceful and humane alternative.

#### NOTES

1. This paper is for Ron Dickson who "retired" from Sunday Morning Hockey on March 28, 1992. A first draft of the paper was presented to a captive audience of the Sunday Morning Boys at the Perth Community Centre in November of 1986 just before I left for a year in Australia. The reason they were captive was the someone had locked the dressing room door from the outside and they couldn't get out. As I completed my reading a hush fell over the room. Then everyone

stood up and in turn shook me silently by the hand and wished me a speedy trip Down Under. Critical response to my effort arrived in Darwin Australia at Christmas-time in the form of collection of essays compiled by the Sunday Morning Boys and edited by Greg McNally under the same title as heads this dissertation. Since their title is better than mine ("The Global Implications of Sunday Morning Hockey"), I have decided to use it instead. Indeed, because it is better I have a right to it. That's the way we play.

2. Though I cannot present the case for this understanding of Australian Aboriginal culture here, I can refer you to my published work on the topic, in particular my book *Return to Eden; a journey through the Promised Landscape of Amagalyuagba* (New York; Peter Lang, 1989) and "Australian Aboriginal Religion as World Religion" (*Studies in Religion*, Vol. 20, No. 2, 1991).