



The successful Terrace Bay rink winning the Birk Stitt trophy at the Lakehead Ladies Bonspiel - l.to r. - Peg Wellings, Ann Latour, Aggie Sinkins and Birdie Lambden.

## ELMER SOPHA TO HEADLINE NIPIGON LIBERAL MEETING

Robert Nixon, Liberal Provincial Opposition Leader, announced that he has made arrangements for Elmer Sopha, M.P.P., to address the Nipigon nomination meeting of the Thunder Bay Liberal Association on April 8th.

Mr. Sopha, represents Sudbury in the Provincial House and Mr. Nixon said that in view of the prominence that the Thunder Bay Riding would hold in the forthcoming Provincial Elections he was anxious that the very highest calibre Liberal representatives would come to the Riding. "The Thunder Bay Liberal Association is delighted that the Provincial organization is attaching such importance to our Riding", commented Bill Harris of Nipigon, President of the Thunder Bay Liberal Association. "Now that the Thunder Bay Riding is separate from the dominating influence of the Lakehead cities, it is obvious that the local communities have become much more important in Provincial eyes. The founding meeting of the Thunder Bay Provincial Association starts at 10.30a.m. on April 8 at the Elks Hall, Nipigon. It will be followed by a luncheon which Mr. Sopha will address and after lunch a nominating meeting will be held. Two candidates at present are permitting their names to stand. Mr. Joe Douglas, Principal of the Separate School at Beardmore and a long time resident of the area will be one candidate and Raymond Rudiak of Geraldton, a technical sales representative for a national corporation, presently working out of Ottawa is a definite second candidate.

# THE SPORTS BEAT

By Glen May



## Great in '68

Today in this psychedelic age in Canada most people are still squeemish when confronted with the problem of trying to draw to an inside straight.

But, and let me use that preposition again; but why does Canada send a representative to Europe seeking supremacy in World and Olympic hockey?

Why — I'll tell you why! Canadians are the best in the world when it comes to playing hockey, be it amateur or professional. Canada took the first curtain call way back when, and there will always be a Canadian hockey team wherever there's a World or Olympic tournament.

Sure, we've taken a few beatings over the past five years from the Russians, Czechs and Swedes, but so what? Our national pride has been stung and there have been a platoon or two of deserters. But let's keep the amateur international hockey picture in perspective.

The European clubs have made vast improvements with their national teams over the past ten years. They had to. When you're at the bottom there's no place to go but up. And where did they learn the finer points of hockey? From watching Canadian teams and receiving coaching from Canadian players who spent two and three years in such places as Prague and Vienna.

It took these European clubs years and years to reach the standard of excellence they now possess. This was achieved through hard work on a national level with national sacrifices being made. For eons the European clubs suffered humiliating defeats while Canadians sat back and laughed at the less talented European clubs with their weak skaters.

In those days the European squads didn't bellyache about officials. They didn't offer ex-

cuses about being robbed by disputed goals. They went out and took their beating. Yet, there must have been a powerful motivating force behind these clubs to continue in international competition.

Eventually they crept closer and closer to Canadian competence on the ice. Scores dropped from 18-0 to 7-1. If Finland scored a goal ten years ago against Canada it was a moral victory for the Finns. Today the Finnish team played almost 40 minutes of hockey on par with the Canucks.

Year after year a Canadian team making the annual European junket would continue to practise and play by Canadian rules. It had worked in the past, so why make any changes? Victory can never be a perennial quality with stagnant systems. Almost too late Canada has discovered this fact. To win today against top European competition a Canadian team must abide by international rules.

These rules have always been in effect. But Canada's coat of complacency shrouded them. Five years ago Russia began to dominate the international hockey scene. Five years ago Canada embarked on the most risky hockey program ever initiated in this country.

It was a gamble which would have made any riverboat card shark along the Mississippi smile. Canada was betting its bankroll against a stacked deck. It was a plan designed to reach a successful climax in the Olympic year of 1968.

It almost worked this year. Next year it can't miss.

To men like Father David Bauer and Jackie McLeod the odds don't mean a damn. They've been given a grubstake and will bankroll it into an Olympic Championship.

Amen.