

PEPP-TALK

with
Harry
Pepper

Before starting out on my subject for this week's column I want it clearly understood that it has always been my belief that anyone who works for and with kids must have a lot of things going for them in more ways than one.

People who get up in the early hours of a winter morning to face snow and ice and travel to an arena to help train our youngsters are owed a lot of thanks by the citizens of our country for this valuable and selfless work with the hockey education of our youngsters.

The reason I'm making this point is that I have to say something about our minor

hockey system which could reflect on some of the people in charge of it.

The last time I did this, the ink had hardly got dry on the paper before I got a call from a gentleman in Trail telling me that I had made them look like a "bunch of ogres," whose axiom in life was the one which is used only too frequently in our society these days, "To hell with you, Jack, I'm OK."

Now we have that behind us I can go on with what I wanted to say in this column. Behind it all is a fact of life which could be changed with a little spirit of give and take. As I stated last week this year's Rossland Warrior

hockey team will be without a doubt the youngest ever to wear the red and white. We in Rossland now have a very successful minor hockey association, but it has only become successful in the last few years as more people with the required know-how have come forward to act as coaches, managers and trainers for the young-uns.

But it is a fact of life that you can only draw so many youngsters from a population of 4,500 people. Add to this that in Rossland we have a very strong competitor for our youngsters' attention. Besides playing hockey, we have up here excellent facilities for skiing. One can hardly expect it to go unnoticed.

So, we have an excellent organization working on behalf of kid hockey, but it is young. In a few years it may produce the necessary youngsters, well trained and old enough to break into the Warrior line-up, however, this year's team has about seven or eight youngsters that are still of Bantam and first-year Midget age, according to word I get from Warrior coach Lloyd McLellan.

The way Lloyd tells it, there are several kids available in the juvenile age group in Trail who are willing to come to Rossland to try out for our team but according to what I hear from people in the know, the

present system turns thumbs down on the idea. Jim Markle, KIJHL president, says that they have tried for two years now to get something done about this situation but have had no success thus far.

With the economic situation the way it is at present, the idea of bringing kids in from out of town to try out for the team is not very promising. The only solution would appear to be possible access to the multi-player pool of talent that Trail has.

With the advent last season of the team in Beaver Valley, every centre around the area now has a member team in the KIJHL and last year the teams were pretty well matched. But Rossland is losing a number of players this year and the incoming youngsters are really not of the age to be tried in the kind of hockey which is played in this league.

To assure a competitive league, some moves could be made to free some of the kids who would be willing to play Junior "B" to allow them to try out for the Rossland team. Trail is, of course, the obvious answer with its large minor hockey registration. Some could surely be given the right to play elsewhere.

I can well remember some years back when a Trail juvenile team swept all before it to a provincial final.

If memory serves me correctly, there were several Rossland kids on that team, names like McFarland and Cox stand out in my memory as some of the players who helped Trail win. Then again we have had some dandies on Warrior teams from down in Trail. Names like McCarthy, Jones and Godfrey will always be remembered by Rossland fans.

The interchange has gone on and on with no apparent harm to either organization. Now that we in Rossland need some help to tide us over until our talent has a chance to age, a helping hand from our friends in Trail could really help.

This week's retirees' day at the upper course unfortunately clashed with a retirees' and ladies' day at the Birchbank course. I noticed some 20 names on the draw that are regulars at our weekly outings at the upper course, consequently, our numbers were down. There were just 13 members on the course which was quite damp as we teed off a little after 9 a.m.

Russ Broughton won low net and Joe Rosse had the least putts. Russ had a net 37 while Joe only used his putter on 14 occasions. Rich Watkinson and I handled the rather simple proceedings. Next week's festivities will start a little later.