

Just Sayin'
An Editorial Comment

Don and Ron both need to go

I am sure that there are many of you who have attended an auction sometime in your lives. Typically there are dozens of ``box lot`` treasures offered throughout the sale. Inside that box is something you really wanted, but also a lot of junk that will likely get pitched as soon as you get home.

When Rogers Sportsnet bought the ``box lot`` that was *Hockey Night in Canada* for almost six billion dollars, lots of bits and pieces came with that iconic Canadian program, including *Coaches Corner* featuring Don Cherry and Ron Maclean.

Many in the media at the time of the sale suggested that Rogers make a clean break with *Coaches Corner* and re-imagine what a between period offering could look like. Rogers chose not to do that, and rather than pitch Ron and Don to the curb they continued to allow this offensive duo a weekly time slot to allow racist, homophobic and violent stereotypes to go unchallenged.

Surprise, surprise.....Rogers just got bitten in the backside by their decision that pandered to the lowest common denominator in the hockey community. Don Cherry, the Clown Prince of sports broadcasters, who regularly dresses like he is wearing the curtains from a New Orleans bordello, crossed a line that even he had not crossed before by suggesting that New Canadians were exclusively responsible for fewer Canadians wearing poppies and that ``those people`` only wanted to take from Canada, rather than give. Ron Maclean, the supposed responsible adult in the room, hired to babysit Cherry and be his foil at times, nodded and smiled and said nothing.

Within hours the CRTC, which governs television and radio in Canada had received over 10,000 complaints with more flooding in every hour. Ron Maclean, realizing the firestorm let lose by his inability to moderate Cherry, issued an immediate apology the day after, clearly looking to preserve his lucrative broadcasting position within the Hockey Night in Canada family.

Rogers issued an apology on the same day, followed by a strongly worded statement from the Canadian Legion disavowing Cherry`s nonsense, and the final nail in the coffin for Cherry was when Labatt, who sponsors *Coaches Corner*, said they could not endorse in anyway what Don and Ron had done on that Saturday night.

Cherry, who at various times in his career spewed anti-French, anti-Russian, anti-European and pro-violence views regarding hockey, had survived all of those many missteps because his ratings outweighed the damage done to the *Hockey Night in Canada* brand.

While Cherry has targeted every team in the NHL for attack, the ones I remember the most have been directed against the Vancouver Canucks, and their two former star players Daniel and Hendrik Sedin. I will admit that I am a long time Vancouver fan (yes I know I need counselling) but what Cherry endorsed and supported in these two situations was typical of his Neanderthal mindset. First, Cherry endorsed Brad Marchand`s cowardly stick work on both of the Sedins during the Vancouver-Boston Stanley Cup final only a few years ago. Second, Cherry refused to call out players from across the league who labelled Daniel and Hendrik ``the Sedin sisters`` because likely the name callers were ``those good Canadian boys`` that Cherry continually romanticizes as knights in ballistic plastic.

Cherry was shown the door two days after his over the top screed about poppies and New Canadians, but mysteriously Ron Maclean still has a job. Maclean has on occasion either challenged Cherry`s blatant ignorance or mocked him with the punny line to close the segment. There has been virtually none of that since *Hockey Night in Canada* moved to Sportsnet, and unless Maclean was directly ordered by Rogers management to simply host, smile and say nothing, he needs to be the next one fired from hockey broadcasts in Canada.

Maclean, by all accounts is a decent person, and a top shelf amateur hockey referee. I would like to believe if he heard racist or homophobic comments being made in a game he was officiating that he would deal with the comment and the commentator immediately. From what I have heard he has done this and continues to do it in his duties as an official. That makes it even harder for me to understand why Maclean has been so incapable of reigning in, tempering and

correcting Cherry at his worst. Maclean`s silence is tantamount to him endorsing the garbage that regularly comes out of Cherry`s mouth.

Coaches Corner is hopefully dead, and if we are lucky Don Cherry and likely Ron Maclean will seldom be heard from again. Their views on hockey do nothing but reinforce the meat-head stereotypes of hockey that may be the death of the game in a generation or two. Parents in the droves are pulling their children from the sport and signing them up for basketball and soccer that are more inclusive, less violent and not in need of the advice of two clowns who have very little to say at the best of times.