

Olympic Coin Program

Congratulations are due to the Olympic coin team for its efforts to date, particularly when one considers the government's constant delays and the surrounding confusion and secrecy which the government has permitted in the entire Olympic program from as far back as 1969 when the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) first extended Canada's acceptance of the idea of hosting the 1976 Olympics in this country. Had the Prime Minister realized from the beginning that his signature on that letter of acceptance was a financial commitment, there can be no question that we would not have been subjected to the difficulties and contradictions which subsequently arose not only during the debate on Bill C-196 but also prior to and since the passage of the bill.

Because of the government's tactics and inaction, the Canadian public is still confused as to the financing of these games. Had the Prime Minister and the government come out in the open at an early stage as well, we might have had the opportunity to decentralize the Olympic games. This gives me an opportunity to repeat what I said in the House as far back as January of this year. On January 16, 1973, I said in this House:

We all know that today's magnitude of the games could become a costly proposition and thus, most probably, a problem with far reaching consequences. I suggest that the government . . . has been most obvious in trying to evade this issue, and therefore I should like to make some suggestions regarding this matter through this House.

Realizing the possibilities of incurring high costs, we must look for some options or alternatives. The Olympic games in recent years have become much too large and complicated, both in regard to facilities and the number of participants, to be held in any one city. They are no longer the games consisting of a small scattering of individual athletes . . .

I believe that Montreal is the city best able to cope with the multitude of problems that would be faced by staging the games in Canada. However, because of the costs and added possible benefits to our country, we should consider partially decentralizing the games somewhat along the lines of the Munich Olympics, which in fact took place in as many as seven different cities, one as far away as 550 miles from Munich.

It is too bad that because of the government's lack of action and interest in this matter there will not be any coast to coast physical facilities in the wake of the Olympic games in 1976. I am convinced that future Olympic games will incorporate the idea of decentralization in the host country, and by so doing curb exorbitant expenditures and eliminate the high risks of financing the games through such programs as the ones we are now facing. I might add that the risk does exist, particularly when we notice that at this late date the minister still states that a face value of \$450 million of coins will be needed to net a profit to the Olympic organization of \$250 million.

Since Bill C-196 was passed this July, the inflationary problems that we are currently facing will certainly have an effect on the originally planned seigniorage, which ultimately will effect COJO. It is because of this party's amendments to the bill that the House will have an opportunity to study the program and to make any necessary adjustments between now and 1976 to further protect not only COJO but the taxpayer.

There are still many unanswered questions regarding the Olympics as a whole, such as the proposed expenditures by the CBC, the proposed expenditures by CMHC, additional security, immigration costs, and many others.

[Mr. Jelinek.]

While we admit to our complete support for the Olympic games and for the benefits that will accrue to Canada and Canadians—and, as the minister said, they will be many—we also do not hesitate to point out our intention to remain watchdogs for the taxpayer and I shall be the first to attack any unnecessary expenditure of public funds.

I shall also, on the other hand, attack at every opportunity those individuals or groups of individuals such as the NDP who would seek to discredit the Olympic movement for the sake of personal or party gain by appealing to bigotry and envy and by trying to play one section of this country against another. The Olympics, Mr. Speaker, belong to Canada. They will reflect Canada to the world and will bring to Canada a sense of pride and unity.

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, may I begin by thanking the minister for making copies of his statement available to opposition parties some time before he presented it in the House. I feel this is very important because it gives us an opportunity to put our arguments in order, even if we have to re-order some of them, as the hon. member did who spoke just before me.

I suggest that although the minister spoke about the Olympic ideal, which he did in suitably reverential, if not counterfeit tones, he should be reminded that the original Olympics were not confined to athletics only but included poets, rhapsodists—

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): Musicians.

Mr. Rose: —yes, musicians and other exciting people. I therefore urge the minister and those people who are responsible for this presentation, such as COJO, to make certain that Canadian cultural aspects in their broadest sense are properly presented and made manifest at the 1976 Montreal Olympics.

I also remind the minister that, although at this moment we are considering \$250 million for what has been described as a carnival of sweat, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra is begging all over North America for money to ensure its survival. I hope, therefore, that some of the seigniorage from this program will spin off for the benefit of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Rose: I and the members of my party welcome the statement made by the Postmaster General Mr. Ouellet launching the Canadian Olympic Coinage Program. I say this despite the fact that my party fought vigorously against this method of financing, both in committee and in the House of Commons. We fought the scheme not because our party is anti-sport or—I say this incidentally since it was brought up—bigotedly anti-French; we fought the scheme because we believed that the method of financing the Olympics through coins and lotteries, while perhaps appealing to two basic human instincts, hoarding and gambling, was not satisfactory. We felt the idea was worth fighting because we could not see how the sales target could be met, and it followed that any shortfall in the sales of these coins would have to be met by those Canadians who are among the most economically deprived in our country, Canadians living in the province of Quebec.