

*Olympic Financing***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

[English]

OLYMPIC (1976) ACT

AMENDMENT COVERING ISSUE OF GOLD COINS

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-63, to amend the Olympic (1976) Act, as reported (without amendment) from the Standing Committee on Miscellaneous Estimates.

Mr. Sinclair Stevens (York-Simcoe): Mr. Speaker, if I may in a few moments conclude my remarks on motion No. 1, I should like to summarize our point in this way. If hon. members review the existing act which was passed in 1973, section 3 provides that the governor in council, on the recommendation of the Minister of Finance, may by proclamation authorize the issue for circulation in Canada of silver coins bearing respective dates of the denominations \$5 and \$10 commemorating the Olympics. Then subsection (2) provides:

Each Olympic coin shall be of such standard weight, standard millesimal fineness and remedy allowance as the governor in council may prescribe in respect thereof.

Our concern today arises from the fact that in an amendment to section 3 to which I have just referred in the original Olympics legislation the government is proposing to include gold coins of the denomination of \$100 to commemorate the Olympics and bearing the date 1976. The problem is this, Mr. Speaker. When we dealt with the silver coinage legislation the President of the Treasury Board at that time, as well as the Postmaster General made it clear that the amount of silver content of the coins, be they \$5 or \$10 coins, would be consistent.

When the miscellaneous estimates committee reviewed the present bill it turned out that the government is proposing not to have the same quantity of gold in the same coins. In short, the coins will be \$100 gold coins, but in two-sevenths of the coins there will be half an ounce of gold and in the remaining five-sevenths only a quarter-ounce of gold. We believe this is unfortunate. It will be misunderstood by the public and could lead to a situation where those so inclined to do so could perpetrate a fraud upon the Canadian public and upon the people of the world generally.

Second, we question the desirability of having such a small amount of gold content in an Olympic coin as that suggested by the Postmaster General. Most importantly, during committee stage it became apparent that the government was not even committed to a quarter of an ounce of gold in some coins and to half an ounce in other coins. When we first questioned the minister and his officials we understood that the situation was unequivocal. Although we gathered that there could be an amendment, the minister, on the other hand, thought it would not be necessary.

On this point I should like to read directly from the report of the miscellaneous estimates committee proceedings to illustrate the confusion that has led to motion No. 1 which I moved today. I think that what I read will indicate to all hon. members the uncertainty that is in the minds of the minister and his officials concerning the issuance of this gold coinage to commemorate the Olym-

[Mr. Forrestall.]

pics. As reported at page 39:11 of the committee report for Friday, June 27, I asked the minister this question:

I wonder why you have chosen to leave it so vague and not spelling out exactly the amount of gold that will be in these coins.

The minister replied as follows:

We are prepared to be specific about the amount of gold. At the time we were drawing up the bill we were not. I put on the record yesterday that there will be two coins in the same issue, if I may say so; one with a half ounce of gold and the other with a quarter-ounce of gold. The half-ounce of gold will obviously be earmarked for a very precise market, the numismatic market. The quarter-ounce of gold will be circulating coin, which will not have quite the same finish and care in the Mint as the specialized coin will. It is designed primarily for Canadians—

In other words, Mr. Speaker, the cheap coin is for Canadians, the good coin is for the so-called numismatic trade which, as was pointed out by other officials, will be mainly for the European market. I then asked the minister this question:

—I wonder if the minister would indicate if he would be willing to see the act amended to stipulate the minimum requirement—

That is, the minimum of a quarter-ounce in some coins and half an ounce in others. The minister replied:

I will speak to Mr. Page.

He is the marketing director for the numismatics program and earns, incidentally, \$66,000 a year.

If there is any technical problem, I would even go so far as saying what the minimum might be. I am quite prepared to check the amendment and make it specific as far as that goes.

The minister then turned to Mr. Page and asked whether that was right, and Mr. Page replied:

—I think it becomes more of a political question, Mr. Mackasey, than anything else.

Then on the next page the minister had this to say:

I think, Mr. Stevens, if it means anything at all, you have my word that these are the quantities of gold in the coin that we have determined and decided upon.

Then further evidence was given at page 39:28. Mr. Page had this to say:

—if the Minister of Finance wanted to price it—

That is, the gold.

—a year from now and the price of gold went up very significantly... we would have to adjust our prices—in terms of selling prices.

I was thunderstruck by the next comment of the minister, who said:

Or theoretically drop the quantity of gold.

In short, Mr. Speaker, the minister told us to take his word that he was committed to the amount of gold and later at the same meeting he said "or theoretically drop the quantity of gold" that will be in the coins. The minister then went on to address me and said:

I think your points are pretty valid, that we should know. We are not unaware of the particular problem. Who can tell what the price of gold is going to be tomorrow? We will review your suggestion and the questions you have asked.

Later the minister said:

This is the question that has to be resolved over the next ten days.

That last comment has to do with something we will be dealing with in motion No. 2, which is the actual pricing mechanism respecting the gold that may be sold by the