

Olympic Boycott

gone on, the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, that should have left them no choice right at the outset.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

[*Translation*]

Miss MacDonald: Madam Speaker, after two months in power the Liberal government has finally decided, as we did in January, to boycott the Olympic Games. I deplore the delay and the lack of interest shown by the government in that regard. The delay led to the deterioration of our relations with our allies and friends throughout the world. In addition, our athletes were allowed to drift without leadership during that period.

[*English*]

We in this party did not see the need for any delay in taking a stand on this issue. We knew right from the outset that the invasion of Afghanistan required a firm response. We knew that sanctions would have to be imposed against the Soviet Union. That is why the former government showed leadership at NATO, at the OECD, at the United Nations and within the Commonwealth. That is why we announced last January 11 a series of economic sanctions, including a grain embargo, the ending of export credits, the tightening up of high technology sales, and the end of visits of a scientific, cultural and ministerial nature.

Our decision as a government to support the Olympic boycott, a decision announced last January 26, was taken because we knew that such actions would convey clearly to the Soviet Union and, more important, to the people of the Soviet Union, that the invasion of a neutral country will not go unnoticed or unanswered.

It was clear to us that the Soviets intended to use the Olympic Games for propaganda purposes. I only need quote from a paragraph in the most recent "Handbook for Party Activists", an annual publication for Soviet Communist party members, commenting on the choice of Moscow as the site for the games:

The decision to offer this honoured right to hold the Olympic Games in the capital of the first socialist state in the world was convincing proof of the universal recognition of the historical importance and correctness of the course of our country's foreign policy—

Well, it did not take four months for us as a party or as a government, while we were in office, to reject the claim that the holding of the games in Moscow was "convincing proof of the correctness of their foreign policy" especially with regard to the invasion of Afghanistan. We were not prepared to let the Soviet Union justify that kind of aggressive foreign policy. That is why my party welcomes the decision taken by the government to support, albeit belatedly, the widespread boycott of the Moscow Games.

I would urge the government to take the lead now in pursuing with like-minded countries the holding of alternative games of comparable standard so that our athletes may participate in international competition this year.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss Pauline Jewett (New Westminster-Coquitlam): Madam Speaker, may I first take this opportunity to congratulate the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. MacGuigan) on his appointment, and also to thank him for sending me in advance a copy of the statement he has made today.

The position of the New Democratic Party regarding a possible boycott by Canada of the Olympic Games in Moscow was clearly enunciated by the leader of the party in January. We were then, and are now, opposed to the boycott.

Some hon. Members: Shame!

Miss Jewett: In condemning the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union the leader of the NDP urged the Government of Canada to join with the many other nations which had voted against the Soviet invasion in developing international diplomatic, economic and cultural sanctions as the only effective means of bringing forcibly home to the Soviet Union the wishes of ourselves and the United Nations towards them.

We were then, and remain now, convinced that a boycott of the Moscow games would not fulfil the objective of forcing the Soviets out of Afghanistan. Indeed, the Secretary of State for External Affairs admits this himself when he states "any dramatic change in the situation in Afghanistan seems unlikely".

We regret also the decision to single out our athletes to bear personally the total burden of our anger. No comparable sacrifice is asked of others. Furthermore, crippling the games in Moscow probably signs the death warrant of future Olympic Games as well.

Finally, the proposed boycott, far from causing a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, may well serve to escalate East-West tensions, making future arms control and mutual disarmament that much more distant.

The NDP feels the government should reject the boycott and instead show leadership among the 103 nations which, along with Canada, condemned the Soviet action in the United Nations Assembly, by developing effective sanctions to pressure the Soviets to withdraw from Afghanistan. Specifically in the case of Canada, the NDP feels that the termination of bilateral, cultural, and sports relations, the withdrawal of high-technology assistance in trade, and the cancelling of Soviet credit lines in Canada would mark the start of a more effective protest than an Olympic boycott. Such actions, when taken in concert with other nations, would have a strong chance of forcing a change in Soviet policy and would better serve world peace.

● (1720)

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Miss MacDonald: Madam Speaker, I would like to pose a few questions to the minister in this regard. I suppose my first question should really be directed to the Secretary of State (Mr. Fox), but I am sure the minister will be able to answer in his absence.