

Establishment of Little League Week

like the hon. member for Essex (Mr. Whelan), I should like to take part in this debate. My colleague just interjected that perhaps the heaviest-hitter in the government is the Minister of Labour (Mr. Mackasey). I should say for the record that I did try to get one of our athletes to take part in the debate this afternoon, but they are either too stiff to get around after the Governor General's skating party or are at home with the 'flu.

Seriously, as one who has had a very sincere interest in baseball all my life I give my full support to this bill. I think it is a very worth-while measure. Many of us have had a connection with Little League baseball in our constituencies. I suppose, like most members of this House, my interest is good but my ability to participate is diminished by my activities here.

Those who assist Little League baseball, the fathers and others who are community-minded, deserve a great deal of credit for this type of activity. I take the opportunity to personally congratulate these people for the work they do. They unselfishly devote many hours to the Little League. I know something about this matter. So far as the value of Little League baseball is concerned, one of its greatest advantages is that where there are Little Leagues, juvenile delinquency is probably at a rate lower than any other part of the country. In other words, this type of activity reduces one of the problems with which we are so concerned these days.

I am also pleased to take part in this debate because of the diminishing interest there now seems to be in baseball. It is not as popular as body-contact sports such as football and hockey. Television presents these sports to greater advantage. Nevertheless, baseball is deeply rooted in our lives. I think a measure such as this would not only help our young people but would cause more attention to be directed to a very honourable sport and one which has not quite the glamour of some others.

Some thought should be given in committee to the considerations in respect of declaring such-and-such a week to be an official week, because it may be that everyone who has a pet project would want to have it authorized as one of the 52 that could have a week of recognition during the year. With that one qualification, I should like to congratulate the honourable, heavy-hitter from Essex for bringing forward this measure. I support its referral to the committee and hope something will come out of this proposal.

[Mr. Bell.]

Mr. Les Benjamin (Regina-Lake Centre): Mr. Speaker, I, too, wish to congratulate the hon. member for Essex (Mr. Whelan) for sponsoring this bill. I am pleased to support it. Like the hon. member and like many other members of this House, I am a ball player—but I come from the prairies, where we play more and better ball. There was no Little League baseball when I was of the age when I might have played it. I did not have an opportunity to play baseball until I was 20 years of age. I am sure I would have been a much better player had there been a Little League in those days. However, when one watches the efforts of the House of Commons team and the young PCs Allstars on the lawn of Parliament Hill each year, one realizes that the Little League would have been useful in earlier days.

I should also like to add to what the previous speaker said about the interest in baseball these days. Baseball has always been my favourite sport. It requires a great deal of effort and organization to promote and keep it going. It is a sport which requires modern equipment, facilities, grounds, and so on. I believe it also requires a greater degree of thinking while one is playing than most other sports. In my opinion this is needed in the sporting world as well as the physical training that goes with all sports.

The other point I wish to make also pertains to something said by the previous speaker. While I have nothing against pancake weeks or basket-weaving weeks, and so on, I believe a program such as the Little League is more deserving of this type of recognition than some of the commercial-product type national weeks and days we have all year, every year right across this country. Again I wish to congratulate the hon. member who is sponsoring this bill. We are pleased to support it.

Mr. Lloyd Francis (Ottawa West): Mr. Speaker, I, too, am pleased to commend the hon. member for Essex (Mr. Whelan) who moved this bill. I hope he will not be disturbed if I contribute one or two matters which represent the sort of second thought that must be given to the bill before it is adopted. The hon. member has the office next to mine. He is known for the forthright way in which he expresses his opinions. I am sure that it will not in any way disturb him if I make one or two suggestions which are perhaps worthy of further consideration.