

National Recreation Policy

recreational programs. Perhaps we should even have a ministry responsible for such things as culture, youth and recreation.

The federal government should make available opportunities for the satisfying use of free time. It should provide and protect environmental resources and sponsor research programs to provide an integrated data bank to assist in planning, and provide trained personnel for leadership. If the federal government were to provide the active resources necessary, then we would be well on our way toward satisfying the leisure requirements of this country. I must emphasize that this could become a crisis situation in the future, and I hope we will immediately get on with such a policy.

● (1620)

Mr. S. Victor Railton (Welland): Mr. Speaker, I do not know why I was chosen to speak on recreation, because I have had very much since becoming a member of parliament. We must realize that there are many kinds of recreation. There are also many opinions about recreation. I was just telling a brother member and colleague that I thought when we had duty days we should make sure there are plenty of cribbage boards in the lobbies. I am sure the quality of the speeches in the House would improve—certainly it will after I have completed this one.

A recreational policy for the whole of Canada is a very huge project. In fact, the whole question of recreation possibly could be defined into so many aspects that I do not see how in the world a national policy could really be stated. In my opinion, things like petroleum, forests and railways, and so on, are fairly definable. We can outline the objectives and possibilities in respect of them. In the case of recreation, however, except to say generally that everybody should have recreation of some kind it is almost impossible to group the different kinds of desirable recreation, let alone undesirable recreation, in one big basket or bag.

As hon. members know, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) has been a great advocate of physical fitness. The Government of Canada, through several departments, has backed projects such as Sports Canada and Recreation Canada. I could give a list of dozens of things that are being done. The objective of the fitness and amateur sport branch is to encourage, develop and promote fitness and amateur sport. Grants are given to national agencies and associations so that they may offer programs and leadership training.

Through this program, assistance is given to the province. There are leadership training clinics and skill development classes. The branch assisted the Indian organization. It brought a group down to Hamilton a year or two ago for a big hockey gathering. There is a fitness program in Canada. Sport Participation in Canada is a private, non-profit organization which attempts to motivate Canadians to perhaps more physical activity. I have more, similar information here but I do not intend to bore hon. members with a list of things that are going on.

From the standpoint of national and international competition, we realize that our athletes are under some handicap in getting into a position where they can compete successfully in worldwide competition. This is the reason

[Mr. Schellenberger.]

we encourage and support functions like the Canada Games and the summer and winter games. It is the government's policy to support organizations so they can take part in these games. I think this is the only way in which we can develop athletes of a calibre comparable to athletes of other countries. This also applies to the Olympic games. We have had world champion skaters. We have on the opposition benches a well known competitor who was a world champion in figure skating. I think also of the Magnussen girl from the west who carried the laurels of Canada to first place in world competition. We have a few of this type. I remember that some years ago we were so proud of a girl from Fonthill, near Welland—Marlene Stewart, who was a golf champion.

An hon. Member: Don't forget the hon. member for High Park-Humber Valley (Mr. Jelinek).

Mr. Railton: I mentioned him, but had forgotten his riding. We cannot forget when our national hockey group defeated the Russians. There is no doubt, when one looks at the Russians, that they are a wonderful group of skaters, stickhandlers, bodycheckers and are very well trained. Had it not been, I suppose, for the old fashioned chauvinistic spirit that the Canadians achieved, they might have been beaten. We do not need to kid ourselves that it was because of the superior athletic condition of our team. It was because of their spirit. That is one thing I think may still survive a little better in a democracy: people do not regard a hockey game, even if it is a championship game, as a science or a job but as a means of doing something for the people they represent.

I am being diverted by a sign which is exhibited in the House, I believe rather illegally, which attempts to get my support for a certain team from west of the Ottawa line on Sunday. I can only say I have put my money on Ottawa.

To return to the subject of physical fitness, what is being done in respect of the Canada games and Canadian athletes, and what is being done in trying to coach teams in various sports in order to help us in the Olympic games, is a small part of the total over-all Canadian policy in respect of physical fitness. It is the feeling of the government, and I support it, that most Canadians are overweight. I shall not say how much. We have certain nutritional deficiencies. We have improper diets. In most of the improper diets the big thing is that there are too many calories and not sufficient vitamins and special trace elements, and so on. However, there has not been a worldwide, comparative study done and therefore I would venture to say that most Canadians, in spite of some of the deficiencies mentioned, are about as healthy as people in the rest of the world. An attempt to maintain a proper weight level will improve an individual's health. While we are on that subject I should like to point out that this is not the only way in which people can remain healthy. We must remember that we cannot make everybody healthy just because they have the proper exercise and diet. This is only a small part of the total health expenditure we are making. We must maintain our ability to treat disease, because most diseases are not amenable to prevention by this means.