

Adjournment Debate

the first, nor the last, time this kind of thing happened, as we can well imagine.

In Canada, amateur sport is a real breeding ground of discrimination against Quebeckers, yet the minister seems to be indifferently washing his hands of the matter. In such instances, far from expressing our collective pride, sport breeds nothing but spite and injustice. What is the minister waiting for to realize there is a problem and to take steps to remedy the situation? Is he waiting for more cases of discrimination to occur in the amateur sport?

Let us take the case of Myriam Bédard, twice a gold medal winner, who was harassed and suspended by unilingual English-speaking bureaucrats of Biathlon Canada who threatened to throw her out of the national team of "her" country because she refused to obey unjust orders of a federation that wanted to break its sole star. Mr. Réjean Tremblay, reporter of the daily newspaper *La Presse* wrote an article on that.

There is also the case of the Quebecker figure skaters Paul and Isabelle Duchesnay, bronze medallists in dance at the Albertville Olympic Games, who were forced to wear the colours of France because of the intransigence of the Canadian Figure Skating Association.

Following the Lillehammer Games, Canada as a whole had to acknowledge and appreciate the merits of athletes from Quebec who had distinguished themselves by their talent but also by their tenacity and determination. And God knows they need a lot of tenacity and determination to overcome all the obstacles put on their way by the Canadian amateur sport system.

Nevertheless, nine of the thirteen Canadian medals were won by Quebec athletes. Is it not a clear illustration of a fundamental lesson of life, that one should not be afraid to forge ahead and have self-confidence?

One of the many problems in the amateur sport in Canada is that the distribution of powers between the national and provincial sports organizations makes the Quebec amateur sport system literally dependent on the Canadian system.

For sports events outside Canada, the selection of athletes, coaches, officials, volunteers and other sports professionals depends nearly exclusively on policies developed by the national sports associations with the result we know. Unilingual francophone athletes have an additional obstacle to overcome, in particular at the national selection stages since they cannot communicate in their own language with the coaches and people in charge of the selection and training of athletes who are unilingual anglophones in the majority of cases.

Sports professionals who are unilingual francophones face the same problem. They have less of a chance of getting a job in a Canadian sports organization.

In fact, as Sport Quebec was stressing in its submission to the Commission on the Political and Constitutional Future of Quebec, commonly known as the Bélanger-Campeau Commission, on November 2, 1986, and I quote: "Because it is directly related to Quebec's identity, the most fundamental problem is that the present system considerably limits the assertion of Quebec's policies in the field of sports, since all management is directly governed by the Canadian associations' policies".

That is another one of the many deep-rooted problems of Canadian federalism, a chronic inability to respond to Quebec's development conditions, an over-centralization aimed at imposing uniformity at all costs. I think that it is a failure, nothing less. Will the minister of Canadian Heritage finally realize that?

• (1900)

Mr. Peter Milliken (Parliamentary Secretary to Leader of the Government in the House of Commons): Madam Speaker, it is with pleasure that, on behalf of the Minister of Canadian Heritage, I will answer to the question raised by my colleague from Verchères. He knows very well that his arguments are unfounded.

First, I would like to make a point: the selection of athletes for the Canadian Olympic Hockey Team is ultimately the responsibility of Hockey Canada, not that of the federal government.

Hockey Canada has a very vast network of connections which allows it to be aware of the availability of players. The organization is in constant contact with coaches, scouts, league managers, agents and player representatives, team owners and managers. It consults these resource-persons regularly in order to stay aware of the schedule and the hours to which the players must conform.

[English]

The majority of the players are professional and Hockey Canada had the task of dealing with numerous National Hockey League clubs, European hockey leagues, and universities and colleges in Canada and the United States for the services of the players, not always an easy task.

[Translation]

The Olympic hockey team that played at the winter games in Lillehammer had 23 players, including two francophones from outside Quebec, Adrian Aucoin and Chris Thérien. Jean-Yves Roy, from Rosemère in Quebec, presently with the New York Rangers, was also a member of that team.

• (1905)

It is not true that there were no Quebeckers on Canada's Olympic hockey team. Many Quebec players were considered for the team, but were not retained, primarily because they simply were not available.