

Olympic 1976 Act

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, the hon. gentleman and I have had much correspondence on the subject and much direct talk, as has the mayor of Edmonton. During the second reading debate either the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Chrétien) or the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) made it clear that we intend to help the Commonwealth Games in a similar fashion—in all probability in the same manner. I might add that even if this bill had not been introduced, we should still help the games.

Let me now deal with the question of stamps. The hon. gentleman happens to be a stamp collector by hobby; I know that, because every time he sits next to me he takes the loose stamps on my desk. He does not sell them, and I suspect he does not buy his stamps at a newsstand. The hon. gentleman knows full well that it would be difficult to refuse the Commonwealth Games the sort of treatment which has been accorded the Calgary Stampede.

Mr. Brisco: Mr. Speaker, may I direct a brief question to the Postmaster General. How can one determine weight unless one can compare the weight of one object with the weight of another? How can one determine gloss or lack of gloss, unless one has some means for comparing? In the final analysis, would it not be simpler to have marked on the coins their gold content, be it 14, 18 or 22 carat? Could there not be some means of identification, so that it is not necessary to compare the two coins, and not necessary to have both coins before you at the same time?

Mr. Mackasey: Mr. Speaker, this thought had occurred to me and that is why I spoke to experts in the field, not necessarily experts in my department. I spoke to experts from around the world and they pleaded with me not to do what the hon. member suggests but to do precisely what we are going to do. You know, lead is heavier than gold and heavier than the same volume of feathers. By itself, weight is not important. The important thing is to distinguish between that which is glossy and that which is dull. If you cannot distinguish between the coins you could go to a reputable outfit, like a bank or coin dealer. I suspect that if a bank sells you the wrong coin, it will be more than happy to rectify its mistake.

[Translation]

Mr. Roch La Salle (Joliette): Mr. Speaker, at the end of this debate, I would add some comments on this legislation and on the general principles of holding the Olympics.

I listened carefully to every hon. member who spoke before me, and I heard some most valid remarks. I believe it is important to review what was said on this Olympic spirit and the intent of the bill. I shall try to remain within this context. Of course I feel tempted to make some remarks apart from the bill, but I will try to limit myself to positive and objective comments.

It is important of course to remind the House that this legislation is amending another bill we discussed a few years ago. To refute certain accusations levelled at members of the official opposition, it is worth mentioning that, at the time, there was a minority government, and the Progressive Conservative Party supported the government on a bill for the financing of the games through the minting of coins, the holding of lotteries and the issue of

[Mr. Paproski.]

stamps. Such co-operation existed, and I think it is important to state the fact. There was also on the government side openness to accept a number of amendments.

The impression was at the time that the legislation would be adequate. It seemed to meet the wishes of COJO's management, and I believe no member on either side of this House can refute that. At the time, it was felt that the legislation and other financial provisions would meet the requirements.

I listened carefully to the remarks made by the hon. member for Maisonneuve-Rosemont (Mr. Joyal). Clearly he is quite happy that the facilities are in his constituency, and so much the better for him. He nonetheless suggested that we, on this side, had condemned COJO or accused it of dishonesty. I will say a few words on that. I do not believe such remarks were made by my colleagues, namely that COJO's directors had been dishonest. I do not believe so. But there is now concern on the other side of the House at the way things are going. The public is also concerned about the new turn of events. We are likely to be accused of having adopted a pessimistic attitude. Personally, I feel I am rather among the optimist, convinced as I am of the validity of these Games—I need not repeat that I support them fully—and those who know me are aware of this.

● (1540)

Now, I am willing to accept the figures quoted by the hon. member for Maisonneuve-Rosemont (Mr. Joyal) as to the returns of the Games and the collective enthusiasm which expresses itself by gold coin purchasing and otherwise. However, there is not a single member of this House and especially from the Montreal who is not aware of the general concern of the Canadian people about the costs of the Olympic Games. I do not think either the Mayor of Montreal or Mr. Rousseau are dishonest men; quite the contrary. They are as enthusiastic as they have ever been, and we are lucky they still are, in view of the problems they have had to face. Today, newspapers are reporting a statement made by the Quebec Minister of Municipal Affairs:

The Mayor of Montreal will have to find his own solutions.

Reference is made to the fact that the initial estimates have been exceeded by several millions of dollars. Mr. Rousseau states, and I quote:

It is definitely no longer possible to have modest Games.

Those then, are as many statements that were not made by my colleagues, and statements which stir some concern in the minds of Canadians. They are wondering how such estimates could have been made. Were they wrong? I appreciate the difficulties encountered by COJO, both on account of strike and inflation. All the costs have gone up, there is no doubt about that. This morning, I enquired from the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) about the difference between the original estimates for Mirabel and its actual cost.

It seems that costs will be up by 30 to 40 per cent. There is no doubt about that, and that is not the end of it. Now, I feel that this aspect needs to be underlined to prove to the House that if some hon. members have asked questions, if some hon. members have made statements, they have done so as Canadians who are greatly concerned, and who wish