

*Canadian Professional Football*

of this government so odd. Some of us may have heard of the Process Church of the Final Judgment, which is often referred to as the Satanists. As we know, that church had its origin in the United States and its followers decided to come over the border. We did not see any bill rushed through this House to stop them. In fact, we found the reverse; they were able to pick up a LIP grant of \$40,093. I would imagine, Mr. Speaker, that most members, like myself, sometimes stroll along the Sparks Street mall. If they do, they may be approached by one of the disciples of the Process Church. I would suggest they ask where they receive their greatest assistance in Canada. If any hon. member speaks to the same disciple that I spoke to, he will be rather startled to hear that it was the federal government that gave them their greatest lift in Canada with a LIP grant.

In short, Mr. Speaker, we have a government that sees nothing wrong with giving grants to a foreign religious cult that wishes to come into Canada, and which on the other hand gets up so tight that it asks the parliament of Canada, in face of all the other problems in this country, to give priority to a bill to decide who should play football.

I noticed that the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) was hovering around me. He may wish to speak; I am not sure. Now dealing with sports, Mr. Speaker, I do not want to interfere with "Boom-Boom Knowles". There is an explosion coming, I understand. In fact, he has even told me to be careful what I say now!

**Mr. Sharp:** We are not worried.

**Mr. Stevens:** Mr. Speaker, I think it is pretty obvious why we have this bill before us at this time. In addition to the reasons I have mentioned I think this is perhaps a very easy meeting ground for the poor, tired old government that is so rife with indecision.

**Mr. Sharp:** Like the unity of the Conservative Party—tremendous.

**Mr. Stevens:** What better meeting ground for the left wing of the government, of which presumably the Minister of National Health and Welfare feels he is part, and the right wing of that party, members such as the Minister of Finance (Mr. Turner). Here we have a business proposition and a sports activity blending into one, allowing the right in that party to meet the left and advance something with some type of accord.

● (2110)

Let me be specific. I believe the government should not be giving the priority it is to this bill. We have more serious matters to deal with than a football bill.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

**Mr. Stevens:** The government must accept full responsibility for what we are debating in this House at any time. If they wish to bring in meaningful legislation or, better still, if they would like to name an opposition day to test the confidence of this House, I will be the first to say let's get on with it.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!

[Mr. Stevens.]

**Mr. Stevens:** Second, I suggest the government has no place trying to regulate professional entertainment, which is all that professional sports is in Canada at the present time. I suggest that likely the bill before us is not constitutional. In this regard I agree with the excellent speech by the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin). If the government thinks it is constitutional, exactly where do they get the federal power under the British North America Act?

There is a right for people to choose their own form of entertainment. It may be that, contrary to the government's contention, a Bassett knows what people in Toronto want more than a Lalonde from Montreal. It is no accident that CFTO, the television station, is the number one station for viewers in the Toronto area while the CBC ranks number five.

It was suggested—and surely the minister must have been laughing when he said it—that this bill ties in with national unity. I guess he had been watching the TV series "The National Dream". He referred to such things as the building of the railways. If this is the thread holding our country together, I suggest it is a very, very fragile union that we have in this country.

This bill does not do what the minister should be doing, that is helping amateur sport in this country. When I decided to speak on this bill, I spoke with Canadian and American football players who are now active in the Canadian Football League. I now have the firm conviction that the number one thing that is wrong with Canadian football at the present time is that there is not enough assistance to ensure that players right down to the lowest grades are given the opportunity to learn and play the game that is given those in the United States.

Without mentioning his name, one chap who is perhaps one of the leading players with the Toronto Argonauts told me he played the game in the United States from grade six, and that at the present time they have coaches in their public schools encouraging and coaching the American children to play football. That is how to learn the game. That is how we are so eminent in the world of hockey. If we wish to be eminent in football, it would be more practical for the minister to be suggesting that kind of legislation, rather than fretting over who is going to put on a sports spectacular in Toronto.

Although the point has been made, I think it should be made again that the Canadian Football League is not national. Its activity stops at Montreal. We should bear in mind that almost 25 per cent of the Canadian population lives east of Montreal.

I again refer to how somebody in the Toronto area may look at this. For example, my constituency takes in part of the region of York which would like to build a dome stadium. They have proposed a site and have plans to dig. They have not had one iota of encouragement from the federal government to get on with this development. Surely that is an interesting contrast with the \$500 million the government has put up for the Olympics in Montreal. Dealing again with the Toronto situation, one of the reasons given by the federal authorities as to why we are not entitled to help for a dome stadium is that it might be used for professional football.