

Olympic Financing

A committee can only do its work properly if its members, many of whom are backbenchers of all parties, can effectively examine witnesses, hear briefs, hear the pros and cons of a matter, and then decide. It is important for committees to hear ministers and departmental officers testify. The majority on a committee should not engage in false pretences and press for the early passage of legislation. If a law needs to be passed urgently, all members of the House, no matter where they sit, will agree to its passage, provided its urgency is explained to them.

The new committee system was set up so that debate in the House could be limited. The idea was that one, two, or three spokesmen from the parties would speak on a bill on second reading and either support the bill in principle or not support it, as the case may be. The bill was then to be sent to committee where it could be amended, or amendments could be proposed for consideration at the report stage. Amendments to be proposed at the report stage were to be threshed out in committee in order to save the time of the House. As the hon. member for Rocky Mountain (Mr. Clark) said, members on all sides of the House are interested in seeing legislation passed, although some are more interested than others.

If there is an attempt to ramrod or railroad legislation through a committee, if it is felt that the majority on the committee are using their strength improperly, if some members of parliament are denied adequate opportunity to make known their views on the legislation, the inevitable result is lengthy debate. The experience of the past is remembered when the next bill is before us for second reading, report stage, and third reading.

● (1740)

These amendments have to be made. They are not put forward foolishly, but because a particular member or group of members feel very strongly. That is the reason why, in dealing with the principles of Bill C-63, we have been looking at this amendment. We feel very strongly about it.

We feel the committee hearing did not give the members of the parliament of Canada, and therefore the public of this country, a reasonable opportunity to look at the alternatives to the government's proposal. This is a proposal to assist a national event to make good financially. It is not opposed by this party, although I cannot say that is the case with all parties in this House. Certainly the NDP indicated they are not particularly interested in it. It is in that spirit this amendment has been advanced.

I hope the minister will take the dinner hour to consider whether he can support an amendment which I really believe will not hurt the financing of the Olympics. In fact it might make it a lot more attractive. Perhaps he could discuss the possibility of a sub-amendment with the government House leader. I want to assure the minister that we on this side have tried to evince a spirit of helpfulness in terms of the success of this funding and, therefore, make a contribution to the success of the Olympics. If they fail it will be a matter of national shame, not just city or provincial.

In that spirit we are quite prepared to deal with the matter. We want to be helpful to the minister. Notwithstanding the fact the minister has chosen to leave the

[Mr. Baker (Grenville-Carleton).]

chamber at this point, I hope he will reflect on the advice he has been given to see whether there is some way this matter can be successfully resolved.

I hope that all members of this House, particularly those on the other side, will take to heart the words of the Postmaster General (Mr. Mackasey) with respect to the position of our party with regard to the Olympics in general. Our hope is that our amendment will be accepted in such a way as to enhance in the eyes of the world this very important coin program.

Some hon. Members: Hear, Hear!

Mr. Bob Brisco (Kootenay West): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the debate on this amendment to Bill C-63. It appears that the minister responsible for this bill has taken to heart the advice of my colleague and has adjourned for an early dinner hour to consider the error of his ways and the intelligence of our amendment.

I cannot help but remark on the rather shallow argument presented by the minister with regard to the content of the coins. He is comparing oranges and apples. He speaks of the silver content of the silver coins and refers to three types of silver coins. In the same context he lumps that analogy in with the gold coins.

I honestly do not believe the minister would attempt to deceive the Canadian public in any fashion. Whether it is intentional or not, there is no question in my mind that Canadians will be deceived if the particular policy the minister advances in this bill is followed through and adopted without the application of the reasoned and sensible amendment provided by the opposition.

I would like to draw another analogy to this type of legislation and to the policy the minister has evolved within his department, whether he realizes it or not. I refer to the policy of selling Canadian stamps in mint condition to certain dealers in Europe and the United States for a lesser amount than you or I can buy them with over the counter at the post office. That is a very questionable policy.

In light of that policy we must also consider what is in the mind of the minister with regard to the gold coins. Now that the minister has had an opportunity to have a quick dinner, reflect on the amendment and return to the chamber, I hope, politely admonished, that he will accept our amendment and reconsider his argument with regard to comparing the silver coin with the gold coin. As I said in the minister's absence, it is a comparison of oranges and apples, because we must assume the silver content is the same in all three coins.

When it comes to purchases, I am just as gullible as the next fellow. All I ask is that Canadians not be gulled by the content. I can understand the minister's reasons for being reluctant at this time to put forward the gold content. Certainly it depends on the cost of gold at the point of minting, but why two separate values? The minister would give the people of Canada confidence in a department which requires an instilling of confidence by simply accepting a reasoned and sensible amendment.

I think there has been enough scolding and enough concern expressed with regard to the proceedings of the