

*Sports Franchises*

that if his motion to have a team in all the capitals of Canada passes we will get one in Saskatoon before Regina.

● (1720)

The Hon. Member indicated that the proposed Bill may not solve the problem, but it is extremely important to find a solution down the road. Hopefully a Bill will be introduced and Saskatoon will have its team. Perhaps it will not be this Bill, but I hope it does go to committee.

When the debate began last spring, people had gut feelings that Saskatoon would have a team. I was nervous that their expectations were too high. The local fans believed that the matter would be easily handled. I have had experience in other parts of the world dealing with multinational corporations. I really felt for the fans because I knew they would probably be let down. This is what happened: they were let down.

The NHL, which is big business in a sense, is out to make a profit. The dimension of the people at the bottom who make it work, the fans, is forgotten. If it happens to be a fruit company in Central America or a sugar company in Brazil, the people at the bottom make it work, but they are frequently the ones who are left out or do not have a say in what goes on. When all this was taking place in Saskatoon last spring, I constantly had the feeling that I was experiencing something I had lived through before in other parts of the world. I felt nobody who would listen to the people at the bottom, the fans or the families of the players. If it were not for these people there would not be a National Hockey League, but I knew that the League would be thinking of other things, such as a bigger drawing centre or more sure profits.

There is a special breed of person in Saskatchewan. They are people who really believe in the game. They are willing to go to great sacrifices to see that this comes about. We in the House of Commons have a duty to see that that is respected. We must find a way to change the law or introduce whatever piece of legislation is necessary to ensure that the National Hockey League cannot step in and say that Saskatchewan cannot have a team, even though the base is there, the money is there and everything is in place to make it operate. We, as Members of Parliament, have a responsibility.

I am very happy that all three Parties were in accord. Last spring the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau) wrote a letter to the National Hockey League. The Progressive Conservative Party supported the idea of a franchise in Saskatoon. The New Democratic Party supported the idea. It appeared to be a unanimous decision of the House, but unfortunately the franchise was not given to Saskatoon and in a sense we are still out in the cold.

We support morally and in every way we can the Motion of the Hon. Member for Saskatoon West. I trust the Government will see that the matter gets to committee and that it will be studied there. The National Hockey League will be able to appear and give its point of view. The League could be questioned. Basically there is nothing to hide. If it has a good reason, let us hear it. If it does not have a good reason, let us ask why. It is simple. It is the way the country runs. It is the

way committees are set up. It is what Parliament is about. I trust the Government will let this Bill go to committee and that there will be a positive result for all people in Saskatchewan who want a professional hockey team in Saskatoon.

**Mr. Chris Speyer (Cambridge):** Mr. Speaker, I assure the House that my comments with respect to this Bill will be relatively short. I come from Cambridge. My family has had a considerable amount of history in hockey; this is what really prompts me to speak. My father played in the National Hockey League. Although I do not have the abilities of the Hon. Member for Joliette (Mr. La Salle), I certainly love the sport.

Quite frankly, I was shocked by what I thought was shabby treatment of the application of Saskatoon last spring. I know from watching all professional sports what great fans are the people of Saskatchewan and I know what a great contribution that sport makes to the Province of Saskatchewan. It is unbelievable that people will drive 300 or 400 miles to watch a Roughriders game. That Province has an incredible amount of spirit, it richly deserves a National Hockey League franchise.

There may be good reasons which have not been indicated why the application was turned down, but certainly the manner in which the NHL dealt with the matter does not satisfy me. I think there has to be some accountability of all professional sports teams. In that regard I think of hockey as one of our national treasures. It is one of the sports, like football, which helped to unite the nation. It gives us a real sense of competition. We all care very much about our professional teams. That being the case, there is really a public trust involved. Because this is so, I think there is an obligation on the part of the NHL to be very frank and to indicate why the franchise was turned down.

I remember the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), perhaps it was last June, indicating in a public release that he would see whether there was some way in which he could use his good offices to influence the president of the National Hockey League in the matter. The Prime Minister made a promise to all Canadians; he made a promise in the House that he would use his good offices to see whether or not the Saskatoon application might be accepted. What better way could there be than by referring this matter to committee?

I listened with a great degree of interest to the representations of the Hon. Member for Welland (Mr. Parent) who professed to care about this subject matter but said that the Bill was unsatisfactory. I would like to put the Government side to the test because I believe that the subject matter ought to be investigated by the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs of the House of Commons. Everyone in the House knows that at this particular point in time there is no reason that it cannot be immediately referred to that committee for a full hearing.

Accordingly, I move, seconded by the Hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona (Mr. Kilgour):

That the motion be amended by deleting all the words after the word "that" and substituting the following therefor: