

Athletic Contests and Events Pools Act

Development Committee felt when, after petitioning the world community for the right and privilege of hosting the XV Olympiad, that Olympiad was granted to the city of Calgary.

It was granted in part because different levels of Government, federal, provincial and municipal, provided the world community with guarantees relative to their portion of the funding. The guarantee provided by the federal Government was on the order of \$200 million.

I stand here, recognizing the fact that the Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport (Mr. Perrault) introduced a Bill to establish a sports betting pool approximately a year and a half ago. This is only the second day the House of Commons has been able to debate that Bill. Because of earlier proceedings, it is a short debate today. However, in the meantime, Ministers of the Crown have been running around the country saying that the Conservative Party is filibustering and blocking this particular piece of legislation.

We have also been told by Ministers of the Crown that there is no other way for the federal Government to provide the money to the XV Olympiad other than through the passage of this Bill. I suggest to the House that both statements, no matter which Minister made them or where they were made, have no basis in fact.

I said on a radio program that I felt it was an example of one of the least honest statements I had ever heard a Minister make. To imply that the Conservative Party is responsible for filibustering the Bill when it has been around for a year and a half, and today being only the second day on which the Government has brought it forward for debate, is simply to stretch the truth to the point at which it is unrecognizable.

Also, to suggest to the Canadian people that the federal Government's funding commitment in relation to those Olympics is dependent on passage of the Bill is also pure nonsense.

Hon. Members who were listening to the debate earlier this day heard our spokesperson indicate, in a statistical sense, the difficulty which such a sports pool Bill is facing. If one lays aside the moral arguments and all the others relative to it, it is less than clear that the passage of the Bill will produce anything but expenses for the federal Government. It is less than clear that one thin dime of revenue will ever be produced to go to those Olympics. On that basis alone, the world community and the Olympic development authority in Calgary should feel alarmed.

The Province of Quebec, as has been mentioned earlier in the House, put in place a betting pool. That is the Province in which interest and attendance at hockey games and so on is presumed to be the greatest in the country. This is a sports betting pool based on hockey and the revenue from it is going down, down, down.

One must consider the wisdom of this piece of legislation. The first thought one should have in relation to a Bill of this kind relates to the size of the market. Is the market for lotteries in Canada a growing market? Is our population exploding? Do we have more and more people who want more and more lottery tickets, or do we have a saturated market? It is a well

known fact that as the economy goes down, the poorer segments of a society buy more lottery tickets. The thought of instant riches has more appeal the more difficult our lives become. In these tragic times in Canada, with 1,600,000 unemployed Canadians and more people on welfare than there have ever been before, if one looks at the statistics one finds that on a per capita basis Canadians are buying more lottery tickets than they have ever bought before. In what one might call a perfect market condition for lotteries, a sports betting pool is losing its share of the betting market.

Where is the wisdom in Hon. Members of this Chamber approving a piece of legislation to establish something which will cost several millions of dollars to set up during what will surely be a downturn on the market side, when in fact it has already been proven in one major Province that the idea will not work and will not produce revenue?

What I am suggesting to the House is that Hon. Members opposite, acting on direction of the Minister, are likely to force passage of this legislation which will then take money out of the pockets of the Government, will increase the deficit, and will not likely produce any revenue. Where is the wisdom in that? That is the first thing wrong with it. The moral arguments have also been raised. Do we, as responsible Members of Parliament acting on behalf of the Canadian people really want to put out there in the marketplace another tax on the poor? Where is the wisdom in Members of this House of Commons, acting collectively, putting another tax on the poor? Surely Government Members know that it is a tax on the poor, that it is the poor segment of the society which contributes to that tax. Why do Hon. Members opposite want to impose an additional tax on the poor?

This morning, in the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs, the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Miss Bégin), said "I despise lotteries". Every Member of every Party sitting around that table this morning felt the same. If that is any kind of representation of the feelings of Members of the House about the wisdom of this Bill, then surely it must be possible to predict that it will be defeated when it comes time to vote.

● (1700)

If the Bill is not defeated, what conclusion can we draw? Will we look at Liberal Members opposite and see that they have a different understanding of the purpose of this Bill and really applaud an extra tax on the poor, or will they put Party discipline ahead of what is good for the country? I will look very carefully at what the Minister of National Health and Welfare does when this Bill comes before the House for a vote, because she said of the record this morning with great clarity and feeling, "I despise lotteries". As a free thinking Member of Parliament, if she despises lotteries and does not believe in extra taxation on the poor, it seems to me logical that she would have no choice but to stand in the Chamber and vote against the creation of that lottery and that tax. To do otherwise is to admit to Canadians that Party discipline comes ahead of conscience and commonsense.