

Proceedings on Adjournment Motion

Mr. H. E. Gray (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Finance): Mr. Speaker, I am here this evening at the request of the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) to respond to the question asked by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre. I regret that there is nothing I can add to the response of the President of the Treasury Board when he attempted to deal with the hon. member's question on January 14. At that time he said that this matter remains under consideration by the government.

However, I can say, as I have said before on similar occasions, that concern over the question of increased pensions for retired civil servants has been expressed by members on all sides of this house; it is not limited to one particular corner of the house. Therefore, I am going to make a point of drawing the attention of the President of the Treasury Board to the remarks of the hon. member so that he will be able to bear them in mind in his continued consideration of this matter as a member of the government.

SPORTS—EXERCISE OF DRAFT BY NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE

Mr. Steven E. Paproski (Edmonton Centre): Mr. Speaker, my question is reported at page 4323 of *Hansard* and I was hoping that the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro), would have had some startling remarks to make after the discussions that were to take place with the president of the National Hockey League during the Christmas recess. Perhaps he would have discussed what right a young junior hockey player has to choose the club for which he wants to play? What happens the moment he signs his first pro contract? Does the minister realize that the player is the property of that club for life, to be traded and demoted as the club sees fit? I do not think the minister is that concerned. He is unaware of what is happening to our amateur athletes in this country and he does not care about the N.H.L. universal draft; otherwise, he would be here this evening to answer some of these questions.

I was most disappointed to learn that no discussion took place, apparently, about a concomitant situation in hockey which, in my opinion, has far greater substance than the windmill at which the hon. minister chose to tilt. The Professional hockey league has denied that it stoops to slavery in shinny and affirms strongly that this old albatross has been finally discarded. The professionals would have us believe now, that they have no

interest whatsoever in amateur hockey. Finally they have achieved the ultimate solution; that is, an annual draft of overage juniors.

I would like to object, Mr. Speaker, and suggest that professional hockey has merely changed, chameleon-like, to another form of slavery. They may not be called the Sultans of Shinny Slavery any more perhaps, but I suggest that the distinction in the light of facts which have come to hand may be more one of semantics. There still exists in hockey a form of serfdom so odious that I cannot conceive it being countenanced in a so-called just society. I wonder how many hon. members have heard of this fantastic and ingenious arrangement called "Draft of Overage Juniors"? It is a plan so simple and so ingenious that I heartily endorse the recommendation that its authors be installed immediately in the hockey hall of fame.

It means simply that all junior players who reach the age of 19 and one half, which is the new lower age agreed upon by the C.A.H.A. and the professionals, can be drafted for the price of \$3,000, only \$2,200 of which goes to the Junior A team which discovered, developed, educated, and subsidized the player over three or four years.

Quite simply, it means that a player drafted for a mere \$3,000 is worth, only seconds later, a minimum of \$30,000 to the pro club. If he happens to be a Bobby Orr, a Frank Mahovlich, or a Bobby Hull he is instantly worth \$1 million or more. That's a pretty nice profit to turn in a few seconds. Is it any wonder the professionals feel they have achieved the ultimate in arrangements? You have heard the minister say there is no direct liaison now between the professionals and amateurs in the sense of sponsorships. Nevertheless, the liaison is no less effective, iron-clad, and slave like through the unique agreement between the C.A.H.A. and the N.H.L. Under this agreement, which the C.A.H.A. demanded in its search for greater autonomy, the pros pay a sum of approximately \$550,000 a year—a figure which they plan to reduce with time, if you can believe it—in exchange for which the C.A.H.A. agrees to deliver the bodies, so to speak, each June at the annual draft.

Because the boy is under the age of 21, and that was carefully guarded by reducing the age even further to 19½, he is completely at the mercy of the draft, and so is the Junior A team which developed him and which is about to finally reap dividends. The player has no choice about where he may want to

[Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre).]