

Sports Franchises

about the overdue task of amending a number of the major provisions of the Combines Investigation Act, the Hon. Member and others on his side of the House will continue their interest in the subject of competition law and will support its reform.

We have heard a good deal about the outpouring of support from the people of Saskatoon and indeed the people of all Saskatchewan for the proposal to bring a National Hockey League franchise to that city. They, in turn, have been supported by a good many Canadians from all over the country, including my area of the Niagara Peninsula. I am certain that all Members of the House wish them success in their continuing efforts to bring a professional hockey team to Saskatoon. In my opinion it would be good for the city and good for professional hockey.

A fair bit has been written about the National Hockey League and the way it has handled this matter. Not only is the League under inquiry by the Director of Investigation and Research under the Combines Investigation Act in this country, but it has also been sued for \$60 million in a private action in the United States by the Ralston-Purina Company. Because their actions are under inquiry at this time, it would be improper for me to comment on them now. I believe, though, that we should all regret the fact that the situation has developed to the point of protracted litigation in both countries.

I understand that the Director's inquiry under the Combines Investigation Act has been slowed down substantially by a series of court actions taken by the National Hockey League to block the inquiry. Back in June, on application by the Director, the Chairman of the Restrictive Trade Practices Commission issued subpoenas to the members of the board of governors of the League and its senior officials requiring them to appear to give evidence in the inquiry. At that time it was announced in the press that the League intended to co-operate fully with the Director's inquiry.

What has happened? Since then the League has tried to stop the inquiry or throw roadblocks in its way. During the summer, the Federal Court of Canada threw out the League's argument that the subpoenas issued were unconstitutional as being contrary to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. More recently, the court rejected their application to delay the proceedings further pending their appeal of the first decision.

I have a number of other things I wanted to say in this particular debate, but suffice it to say that I believe my colleague for Saskatoon West is wise in bringing this matter to our attention. Like him, I look forward to the time when we can debate it in committee.

Mr. Bob Ogle (Saskatoon East): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to rise today and speak in support of the Bill of my colleague from Saskatoon West (Mr. Hnatyshyn). Let me go on record as saying that my colleague from Saskatoon West wisely lives in Saskatoon East and is one of our more distinguished members of the constituency. Whenever he is away on trips, I always make sure he has little flags and other things to

hand out. He is looking after those matters very well, I understand.

However, today I would like to go on record with him in proclaiming that what happened in Saskatoon this spring was very much against what the people in Saskatoon wanted. Something should be done to see that the wishes of the people in that Province are fulfilled and that Saskatoon will get a major league hockey team.

I accept the fact that the debate up to this point has been in what we would call legalese. It has been strictly on legal terms. I would begin by simply saying that, not being a lawyer, I do not feel competent to speak to the matter in that particular respect.

However, when these matters arise, I can relate to what was said by Robert Service in "The Shooting of Dan McGrew". Let me reflect on how it would relate to lawyers. I am misquoting, but he said: "I am not as wise as those lawyer guys, but strictly between us two, it is between you and me and the rest of us that we will maybe save the Blues". That is not exactly how he said it but it is in that manner that all Parties, as my hon. friend for Saskatoon West indicated, will have to find a way in which this particular problem can be solved.

A group of people in Saskatoon who were extremely interested in hockey, the city and the Province, had put together a financial package to buy the St. Louis Blues. When they finally made their proposition to the NHL they were treated like children and as if they should not be there. In effect, they were simply discarded. There must be a way to resolve this problem in an adult manner.

During the negotiations between Saskatoon and the National Hockey League this past year, I would say that I probably received more mail on this particular subject than anything else. That points very directly to the fact that hockey is part and parcel of life in that Province. As my colleague for Saskatoon West indicated, that area has been looked upon by the NHL over the years as one of the factories of hockey players. Many fans in that area are related to or familiar with National Hockey League players and want to see them playing hockey in Saskatoon.

A friend of mine, Tom Bentley, whose name relates very closely to one of the great hockey families in Saskatoon, is a senior hockey player now, as are many old Saskatchewan people who keep playing hockey years after they should have known enough to stop. He lives in Clavet now. He said that it would be important to have a team in Saskatoon because they are real fans in that city. They understand, are knowledgeable and know who is good and who is not. Since they play the game themselves, they know which players are skilful. This is quite different from other NHL cities where the fans want to see violence or something else. They do not go to see the skills that these players have gained while playing this sport.

I would like to say a word to the Hon. Member for Welland (Mr. Parent) who indicated that he supported the general idea of NHL teams all across the country. I would point out to him that Saskatoon is not the capital of Saskatchewan yet. I hope