

Competition Bill

Canadian Football League whether there is to be further expansion of the World Football League in Canada. Given the fact that the people of Toronto will support two football teams and want two different professional teams, I suggest that the federal government stay out of the matter because it is not even involved. This will not hurt either the Canadian Football League or the athletes of this country. I cannot understand why, all of a sudden, the Minister of National Health and Welfare should come up with this kind of ridiculous statement in respect of professional football in Canada in this one matter.

This is the minister's third concern:

The National Football League and perhaps even other leagues might introduce franchises into Canadian markets and thus weaken the position of the Canadian football league.

This is the reply of the Northmen:

It is true that other leagues might introduce franchises into Canadian markets. We believe that the Canadian fans should determine what football they wish to watch. However, in the event that the government is determined to limit the choice of Canadian fans, the government if it has legislative authority, could introduce legislation to prohibit these other leagues from entering Canada. In light of the guarantees we are prepared to give as stated, there would clearly be no need to make that legislation retroactive to include the Northmen.

We wish to make it clear that we do not recommend the introduction of this legislation. We feel that the Canadian football fan is the one who should make the choice as to what brand and type of football he wishes to watch. However, if the government is determined in its course, there would now appear to be no need to make the legislation retroactive by including the Northmen within the scope of that legislation, particularly since the Northmen started in business and expended large sums of money long before there was any announced government policy on the matter.

Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the minister's arguments simply do not stand up in light of these guarantees. Even the Commissioner of the CFL has been quoted publicly as admitting that the Canadian Football League can readily survive the introduction of the WFL in Toronto. Under the proposed section 32.3(b) of the Combines Investigation Act, the first charge under this section should be laid against the federal government itself. Let me quote section 32.3(b):

Every one who conspires, combines, agrees or arranges with another person

(b) to limit unreasonably the opportunity for any other person to negotiate with and, if agreement is reached, to play for the team or club of his choice in a professional or amateur league

is guilty of an indictable offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for two years.

Not even I wish the Minister of National Health and Welfare to be imprisoned for two years. Where for example, does this leave the federal government with regard to a player who has signed with the WFL, at this time a legal entity, and where does it leave a player who is subsequently unreasonably denied playing for the team or his choice. I wish the minister were in the House now. Perhaps he could answer that question but I doubt it because he answers very few.

Once again, what could be more ludicrous than the government itself being charged under the very bill it introduced? If the government is to be involved in professional sports, as seems to be the direction it is taking under this proposed legislation, this should be all-encompassing legislation and not merely a band-aid, patchwork approach such as this section of the bill is taking. I will do

[Mr. Jelinek.]

everything in my power to ensure, if the minister brings in legislation to try to stop the World Football League moving into Toronto, that the bill is defeated. I will try to get my colleagues and any other sensible members of this House to vote against such a ridiculous proposition. Somewhere along the line, what should have been the main objective of this type of legislation has been sidetracked. As I have repeatedly emphasized, it is the youth of this country who must be our primary concern.

Apparently this section of the bill is aimed primarily at hockey, Canada's number one participation sport. But the record will show that the NHL has been a responsible organization contributing to the growth of amateur hockey in Canada. For example, financially the league has contributed to the development of hockey in Canada, from both United States and Canadian teams, over \$1 million per year. This is based on payments to the CAHA of \$10,000 per player if he plays in the NHL after he is drafted, \$7,000 per player if he plays in one of the NHL farm clubs after he is drafted, and \$3,000 if the player does not make the NHL or the minor league although he has been drafted by the league. Above and beyond this, the NHL pays a lump sum of several hundred thousand dollars to the CAHA, all of which is divided between the CAHA and the Canadian club responsible for the development of the individual players.

I mention this because the new hockey league, the WHA, which has entered Canada from the United States without any federal intervention whatsoever, provides no such benefits to Canadian youth. I wonder where the minister and other members of the government were when the World Hockey Association moved into Canada? Where was the minister when this new league started taking over the players who played for the NHL, a league which subsidizes amateur athletes. Not only that, but the WHA has bypassed the long established draft rules in the NHL by signing players under 20 years of age and thus jeopardizing not only amateur junior hockey in Canada, but also adversely affecting the one organization that has made a significant contribution to amateur hockey in this country. This statement, of course, removes any doubt that my interest centres around John Bassett Jr. rather than sports in general.

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Where was the federal government when the world hockey association entered the Canadian sports scene? Where was the concern for the advancement of opportunities for the youth of this country? Why did the government fail to provide safeguards and encouragement to the Canadian Amateur Hockey Association, and why are there no proposed changes by this government relating to hockey? Why has football been singled out as a target of intervention? Would it not be reasonable to expect the government to take a firm stand on the protection of this sport long before the world football league was even contemplated? Certainly, safeguards are needed there to keep our amateur junior teams viable.

While we are on this subject of the protection of other sports, may I ask whether the government should not consider obtaining revenue for amateur development from foreign organizations such as professional ice shows—and I am speaking specifically about American ice shows—