

Competition Bill

playing professional football. As a young lad I never tried my hand at football and had no particular liking for it. I wanted to get into hockey. There were only six NHL teams and it was a pretty difficult test. Perhaps I could have done it, perhaps not. I chose ranching instead. But that is not the point. There are many young Canadians, among them my sons and my grandsons, who want to get into professional sports. It pays big money and it is an entertainment. They can get their names in the headlines. As my friend suggests, it is also an industry.

● (1530)

I remember playing shortstop in a ball team and a kid I played against was a good shortstop player. He was sixteen years old at that time. He could have been on my team. He ended up playing professional football. If somebody had come along at that time and said to me that kid will play professional football in Canada, I would have said that that kid does not know the shape of a football; he is sixteen and there is no hope for him at all. That was true then. But he made the Calgary football team and was named rookie of the year. He ended up playing football for the Toronto Argonauts. I would not have thought it possible. It may well be that there is a Canadian star in the NFL. It is an entertainment and Canadians have proven that they are good entertainers if nothing else.

I am thinking of the Toronto Argonauts right now. Years ago I played hockey with Jim Cahill's father. I remember those cold days when his father and I used to get up, light the stove and watch the smoke curl over the roofs of the town. Nobody could have convinced me that Pat Cahill's son could have been a star for the Toronto Argonauts. Toronto was a long way from northern Saskatchewan. I would not have believed that Jim Cahill would have made it, but he did.

Some day a Canadian will get into this conglomerate which operates in the United States. Some day there will be plenty of Canadians playing in the Canadian Football League. Why should the government restrict those Canadians and keep them at home? We did not keep Anne Murray at home. We are proud of her singing ability whenever the government gives her a chance to advertise Canada with a song or two. We said to her: "go forth, young girl, and conquer the entertainment field on the North American continent if you want". We did not keep Lorne Greene home. We sent him to Hollywood, or at least he went himself and he became a star and made "Bonanza" famous. He was one of the most well-liked newscasters in Canada. We did not say to him that he was limited and could not break into that field, that there was no future for him in the United States. We wished him well. We call him back every once in a while and we are proud to say he is Canadian.

Why should we say: a curse on the world football league; you will rob us of Toronto, you will rob us of Canadian talent? I look upon it completely differently. To me, it is a window on the world for a football player. Knowing how much money they are making in football, if I were younger I would take a whack at it. I would not look at the nine teams in Canada and hope to sit warming a bench for one of them. I would say: there are 26 teams in the conglomerate operating in the United States, ten more teams in the world football league, that makes 36 teams, nine teams in

[Mr. Horner (Crowfoot).]

Canada, that makes 45 teams, and they all carry a roster of some 40 players.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order. Does the hon. member wish to ask a question?

Mr. Irénée Pelletier (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I would like to put a question to the hon. member for Crowfoot (Mr. Horner).

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): The hon. member for Sherbrooke.

[Translation]

Mr. Pelletier (Sherbrooke): Mr. Speaker, I would like to know what the hon. member for Crowfoot thinks of the fact that several Canadian athletes go to the United States to further their studies and that we are allowing American professional teams to enter Canada while in most of our universities where there is tremendous athletic potential, they received no help.

In my opinion, the federal government and most provinces have failed their duty. So, I would like to know the hon. member's opinion on that matter, because I think that is where the potential is.

[English]

Mr. Horner (Crowfoot): I do not disagree that there is a great potential in the universities in Canada. That was the very point I was making. But let us not act hastily against the world football league, the Toronto Northmen or any other team. By cutting off our nose to spite our face, we will limit the potential ability of some Canadian down the road. I am no friend of the Bassett family, none whatsoever. I disagreed with them a time or two. But what is the offer they have made? Mr. Bassett owns the franchise to the world football league in Canada. No other team can be formed to enter the world football league without the consent of Mr. Bassett. Whether or not he should have that privilege, I do not know.

However, I know that he is prepared to give that privilege to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) if the latter wants it. He is saying: "Let us operate the team in Toronto. I will not actively put another team in the world football league in Canada and I will give the Minister of National Health and Welfare the privilege of deciding whether there should be a world football league team in Montreal or one in Vancouver". He is also saying what I, as a westerner, fully appreciate, namely, that the Toronto Argonauts have paid into an equalization fund to help support some of the less fortunate teams in western Canada. He also said publicly—and I believe I heard a newscaster in Calgary state it—that he is prepared to make certain that the equalization payment paid last year by the Toronto Argonauts will be met for the next ten years. That is a pretty bold guarantee.

What he is saying really is that, since the Toronto Argonauts paid into the equalization fund \$40,000 last year and if, because of reduced gate receipts as well as the world football league entry, their equalization payment is only \$20,000, Mr. Bassett would personally make up the difference. Being a westerner and somewhat sceptical of