

Establishment of Little League Week

do not have the opportunity to participate in sports. We will be benefiting all Canadians by introducing Little League Week, and assisting those who have worked so hard to accomplish what has been done in this field. We have done a great deal under the Little League organization. It is true that we have worked with people and sports organizations of the United States, but we have found it more practical to establish our own organization and either consult or be affiliated with our friends across the border.

Other facts must be taken into consideration. The hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) indicated that he did not have the opportunity of participating in Little League. I have found across Canada an increased interest in baseball perhaps because I come from an area which hosted the Pan-Am games. We had difficulty in creating a team to participate in the Pan-Am games because there was no organization in Canada which gave our young people an equal opportunity to participate. If they did nothing else, the Pan-Am games established a greater measure of unity across the country.

I think we all applaud the aims of the Little League and its attempts to set age limits. It is most important for us in the House of Commons to show interest in our young people. We hope that our young people will take an interest in what we are doing in Ottawa, and by passing this bill we shall show them we are interested in what they are doing.

It has been suggested over 7,000 adults work hard for many hours to give many of our people an opportunity of participating in Little League baseball. These people do a tremendous job. Sometimes our young people are disappointed and discouraged, especially when they see what some adults are doing behind the scenes. Perhaps we need a new program which will teach these people how to behave when our young people are participating in sports activities.

As it is established, the organization is not designed to produce athletes. Perhaps that is why we have separated from other athletic organizations. The organization is designed to build better citizens in our country. I say this because the organization's regulations state that the organization does not exist for the purpose of putting professionals into the field; it exists to give youngsters the opportunity to participate in sport, to compete and to understand what happens when you win or lose.

I hope that the National Advisory Council and the Committee on Fitness and Amateur Sport will give further consideration to the provision of facilities for organizations such as Little League. It is difficult for Little League to function effectively because when your young people wish to enter sporting events one finds there is difficulty in finding enough space and in obtaining the facilities to enable them and our older people to enjoy themselves. Also, the smaller diamond which Little League players use makes it necessary for the league to play on specified fields. This factor makes Little League operation more expensive.

I therefore hope that financial assistance will be given those who manage the Little League and who have worked long and hard to establish the existing facilities. I repeat, the League does not exist in order to create athletes. To reinforce this point may I read from the Little League pledge, printed on the back of the Little League leaflet. It says:

I trust in God
I love my country and will respect its laws
I will play fair and strive to win
But win or lose I will always do my best

Boys wishing to participate in Little League baseball take this pledge which indicates that the organization is not necessarily designed to produce athletes. I realize that there are only 52 weeks in a year and that almost every organization wants a week set aside for its own purposes. I would not mind combining Little League week with, say, national salad bowl week or pancake week. To some extent, the work carried on by various organizations overlaps in nature, and I should not mind if Little League Week were combined with another national week. I hope the committee will consider the second week in June. That was chosen in preference to one near the end of July; toward the end of July you would have difficulty bringing young people together to play Little League baseball because of the summer holidays.

The second week of June is usually the last week in which we can bring young people together to compete in Little League baseball before the play-offs and exam time. I also think the second week in June fits in best with the over-all program of the organization. I hope this bill will go to committee and that the committee will do a good job of studying and discussing the measure with the people involved in the organization.

Mr. Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?