

Olympic Bill

My third criticism of the bill relates to what the President of the Treasury Board calls the Olympic ideals regarding participation and competition on an international scale. The minister might want to believe that, but the way the wealthy countries of the world view the Olympic games certainly does not constitute the Olympic ideal. Countries which are wealthy and have the necessary funds, prepare their athletes and probably pay them through the armed forces or by attaching them to university training programs. They train them all the year round. So the Olympics have become a political arena where a country can score points. A great deal of fuss is made about who is first in the number of points and about gold, silver and bronze medals. I do not call that the Olympic ideal. Many of these world performers are not amateurs; they are in the pay of their respective countries.

• (1550)

This project might be a feather in the cap of Mr. Drapau but it does nothing for the promotion of amateur athletics in Canada. It is amazing how Canada can assemble all its resources to put on a spectacle of spectacles, but when it comes to solving problems of regional disparities, to solving disparities in freight rates which contribute to regional disparities, or to solving the housing problem it seems that all we ever get is the runaround. But we certainly can assemble our resources so that in three years we can put on this spectacle of spectacles which lasts ten days, where 9,000 athletes will gather and perform for a great mass of spectators.

This kind of bill which gives tacit consent to the Olympic games is not worthy of the support of the members of this House. We ought to concern ourselves with what is in the best interests of Canada, of our young Canadians. Therefore I urge hon. members to vote against this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please. Before I recognize the President of the Treasury Board (Mr. Drury) I want to inform hon. members that if the minister takes the floor at this time he will close the debate.

Hon. C. M. Drury (President of the Treasury Board): Mr. Speaker, I listened with considerable interest to the comments made in this debate. I find that there is general support for the Olympics as a concept, but some opposition to the holding of them at this time in Canada. I do not think that even the members of the NDP would suggest that we should not participate in the Olympics, that we should withhold our participation. They do, however, suggest that the kind of revenues and resources required for a host country to put forward would be inappropriate for us at this time, either because the scale on which Olympics in the past have been conducted in their view is excessive, or that for Canadians we have more urgent and higher priorities.

I am glad to see that they do not condemn our participation in the Olympics altogether. But it does seem perhaps slightly selfish to say we would like Canadians to participate but we, as Canadians, should at no time reciprocate by acting as host. An endeavour is being made, as has been outlined in the bill, for us to act as host, but on a rather more modest scale than has been the case in the past. The principal movers in the games, COJO, the committee

[Mr. Rodriguez.]

responsible, and the mayor of Montreal—the site of the forthcoming Olympics—have made it abundantly clear that they collectively, and the mayor personally, are committed to a very much more modest form of Olympic than has in the past been the case in other countries.

I would think that if Canada can take the lead in this, can succeed in holding the Olympic games in Canada according to the best Olympic traditions, and still get some kind of effective control on costs, this is not only a worth-while venture from the Canadian point of view but also in terms of world co-operation. I would think that even the members of the NDP would support such an aspiration.

The way in which this is going to be done, according to its proponents, will not involve the astronomical charges that in the past had to be met by the host nation as a whole, in this case the federal taxpayer. But revenues will be required; resources will be needed. The federal government has been careful to work out a scheme which will limit the demands on federal resources, and I think that in the explanation of the bill a full explanation of the liabilities that the Government of Canada is willing to assume has been disclosed.

Measures have been taken of a cautionary or precautionary nature to ensure that these charges on the federal exchequer, on the federal taxpayer, do not go beyond the figures set out. Also, I would ask hon. members to recall the letters of assurance received from the leader of the government of Quebec and from the leader of the city of Montreal that no call will be made on the federal exchequer, on federal resources, beyond those outlined in the bill and in the accompanying expository remarks.

There has been considerable comment on the arithmetic of the coinage issue, and not very much about the stamps. There seems to be reasonable satisfaction that the latter will work. In respect of the coinage there has been a fair amount of speculation as to whether it is going into circulation, and whether the quantum of sales at one time advertised by the mayor of Montreal as being probable, can be achieved.

I would suggest that these matters can most satisfactorily be examined and, in a certain number of cases, answered in committee rather than on the floor of this House. I suggest that the floor of this House is not the appropriate place to try to go into technical expositions on the operation of the coinage scheme. In the first place, I do not think the floor of this House gives an adequate opportunity for members to phrase their questions, and secondly I do not think that the whole House is interested in the details of how this system will work.

However, I should point out that in respect of the accountability and our preoccupation with this proposal, on the federal side we have a system which will be designed to see that the fiscal disasters so freely predicted by the hon. member for Timiskaming (Mr. Peters) do not take place, and I trust we will be able to satisfy him in committee, if he has the time to attend, that these disasters are unlikely.

In respect of accountability, I should point out that this is a private corporation. COJO, which is responsible for the running of the games, is not a Crown corporation.