

*Establishment of Little League Week*

**Mr. D. Gordon Blair (Grenville-Carleton):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to participate briefly in this debate. We have listened to a number of our colleagues who have a great love of baseball, and one or two of them are young enough to recall the days when they played it themselves.

**Mr. Bell:** We all are.

**Mr. Blair:** I am not claiming any great record as a baseball player but perhaps I have one distinction, that of having been an executive of one of the local Little Leagues in Ottawa, the McKellar Park Little League, located in the constituency of my good friend the hon. member for Ottawa West (Mr. Francis).

We are all aware that governments are taking a greater interest in sports than in years gone by. Many of the facilities used by Little Leagues are provided by the communities, and principally by the municipalities. There is considerable support for sport from various agencies of the provincial governments. Lately, the National Advisory Council on Fitness and Amateur Sport has played what I consider to be a significant role in encouraging worth-while sport in Canada. I do not wish to recall recent history unduly, but I feel that as Canadians we can all take pride in the efforts which our government and its agencies recently made to reinforce Canada's position in international hockey.

It is against this background of wider government interest in sport that we should consider this bill. Emphasis must be laid on the degree of citizen participation in Little League baseball and similar leagues which support hockey, football and other sports available to boys and young men across Canada. Long hours of voluntary work are spent by those who undertake the responsible jobs of coaching and managing the teams. They virtually dedicate three or four months of the year to the activities of Little League and the children in the community. Anything that we in Parliament can do to encourage this very important degree of citizen participation in the community should be of first importance.

The hon. member for Ottawa West brought some problems to our attention. It is quite obvious that there are not enough weeks in a year to properly recognize or commemorate every sport in this country. After a further study it may well appear that the designation of weeks in support of different branches of sport is not the best way for Canada to show

[Mr. Mahoney.]

national support for sporting activities. When this matter is studied further, we will have to consider the degree of public support which should be given to branches of particular athletics rather than to the total sport itself. Perhaps there is a question whether there should be a week for the support of hockey, baseball, or whatever other athletic activity we think of, rather than for a particular branch or a particular league.

Having made these comments, I think the very fact that the time of the Parliament of Canada is taken up with the consideration of a measure of this type is indicative of the growing importance of organized sport in our community. In conclusion, I emphasize that the kind of baseball played by the youngsters who have the benefit of participating in Little League is far different and perhaps far better than the kind of ball we played as boys. These youngsters are well equipped with uniforms, bats, balls, clothes and all the other paraphernalia; they are properly coached and trained. The same goes for the youngsters in the hockey and football leagues. All this volunteer activity is a credit to our community. I hope the substance of this bill will be given serious consideration by an appropriate committee of the House.

**Mr. Gerald Richard Cobbe (Portage):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the member for Essex (Mr. Whelan) in this bill because I feel it is very important to a great many young people in our country that we designate a week in the second week of June as Little League Week.

The Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Munro) has done, and is doing, a tremendous job in promoting sports activities and providing physical fitness programs across Canada. Perhaps he cannot do that in the House of Commons, owing to the lack of facilities. In many areas of the country there is a tremendous increase in sports participation. Many people are involved in the activities of the Canadian Baseball Association. Those trying to establish a countrywide organization understand the problems confronting the Little League Organization in trying to establish rules, regulations and the type of equipment that is to be used across the country.

• (4:40 p.m.)

Attempts are being made to establish age groups, because in sports organizations across the country there is a tremendous overlapping in this respect and sometimes people