

Sports

were going to fall off the roof. I continued canvassing because I am conscientious with regard to what is good for my country.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Danson: At the first house we could not talk to each other. We sat there with tears in our eyes. They gave me some medicine which carried me on for a little while longer.

The hon. member's motion is important. As the hon. member for York West (Mr. Fleming) said, most Canadians and most members of this House would have tremendous sympathy for it. I certainly do not object to it. I think it has immense merit, but not in its present form. Some of us support it in principle. It certainly would have an impact on the sporting community, particularly Sports Canada and Hockey Canada. I think there is some merit in the federal funding of a national team that represents Canada abroad, but it should be channelled through Hockey Canada. That is where it belongs. That is what Hockey Canada is all about.

It is a credit to parliament that it supported this government in establishing Sports Canada which has done a great deal. When members visit their constituencies they see that the fellows who used to run provincial and national leagues from kitchen tables now have at least minimal facilities. I see how great the spirit is in my constituency. We have a softball team which won the world championship in Manilla. The members of the team were welcome and honoured, when they visited our gallery, by the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau), by parliament and by Sports Canada. I do not think this would have happened so readily if it were not for the great job Sports Canada is doing in all sports with which it is associated.

However, I do not think a permanent hockey team would really reflect the many top players we would like to see represented on a national team, although we see them playing together as a team all the time. Most of our players were far superior but they had not played together as a team long enough. Competition in our regrettably highly commercialized sport of hockey would make it exceedingly expensive or perhaps impossible. Finding a permanent team of sufficiently high standard would be difficult.

● (1750)

Though we were terribly impressed by the Russian team, I understand it is only one of about nine teams of a similar character. I was in Siberia, Russia, last May. I was not sent there; I was on a voluntary visit. It was a beautifully sunny day in the south of Russia, but in the north it was darned cold; it was below zero. I saw children between 8 and 10 years of age playing hockey on artificial ice in an indoor arena. It was very interesting for us to see those youngsters playing hockey so seriously. I do not say it was great hockey, but one could see the difference in style in the way they were being coached. Those children were really skating; there was very little body contact. However, the point I am making is that in Russia there are a number of teams of the highest calibre competing against each other, and this calls for a great effort on our part.

I think the hon. member is on the right track. In a sense, I believe one has to isolate Team Canada; I do not believe it would be good policy to make it part of a wider project. I believe people sincerely wish to support Team Canada. There is nothing seriously wrong about establishing a corporation, giving it a charter, and so on, enabling it to operate independently. But in my view this would be a wrong approach. I believe we should think in terms of Hockey Canada and establish a special fund for Hockey Canada or Team Canada in care of Hockey Canada. The fund would be devoted specifically to supporting the Canadian team. I think, then, the team would be better financed than an NHL team since, as I say, a large number of Canadians would support it on a regular basis.

The idea of a permanent team causes me some concern. I do not know where one would get the players to comprise such a team or who they would play against. I do not wish to talk out this motion, because I believe it is a worthwhile one. I would support it as Hockey Canada with a tax-free privilege for donations intended for Team Canada.

Mr. Leonard Hopkins (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of National Defence): Mr. Speaker, I compliment the hon. member for Niagara Falls (Mr. Hueglin) for bringing this motion forward for discussion. I suggest to him and to the hon. member who has just spoken that the most important fact in hockey is not money, but is conditioning and the will to play. As one who comes from a small community in Ontario, I well recall the days when we used to run to the barn to get out the squared-mouth shovel which we used to clean-off the ice in a ten-acre field so that we could play hockey. Our sticks were usually from a branch of a tree cut in a nearby swamp, and in this way many of the great hockey players of the future developed in those years.

Mr. Bell: What about your pucks?

Mr. Hopkins: Since those days hockey in the rural areas has developed along more sophisticated lines. First, small outdoor rinks were built, and finally covered rinks, leaving the way clear for the establishment of what is known in the rural areas as a bush league. I have played in these bush leagues and I must say I was in much better condition then than I am today. I can recall occasions when I travelled six miles on foot to get a ride for another nine miles to play hockey in my home arena. The visiting team might have come from 30 miles away.

Mr. Bell: Did you ever use a magazine as a shin guard?

Mr. Hopkins: Players in hockey teams all over Canada have come up through these ranks—

Mr. Speaker: Order. I regret very much having to interrupt the hon. member whose speech was obviously of great interest. Indeed, hon. members might, by unanimous consent, be willing to allow the hon. member to continue for a while.

There does not appear to be unanimous consent, so I must consider that the hour set aside for private members' business has expired.