

*Canadian Professional Football*

This bill was supposed to arouse political support for the government in the west and was supposed to give direction to the cause of nationalism. This bill has instead aroused an increasing number of Canadians against the government, and I think that is why throughout the afternoon and evening the hecklers, who are the substitutes for speakers on the government side, have been calling for a truncation of this debate. They are on the wrong side of the issue. The debate is embarrassing them, and that is why they want it to end. Ever since 1956 that party have been in favour of closure. Now they are trying to do it again. They want to put through this House a bill without adequate debate.

● (2150)

Some hon. Members: Shame.

**Mr. Stackhouse:** This bill is a demonstration of the arrogance of this government. It is a bill introduced by a minister who said in his opening remarks that this is a very real and emotional issue that we as a people care about deeply. But I say, hon. members opposite do not care about it deeply enough to debate it adequately.

**Mr. Sharp:** We want a vote.

**Mr. Stackhouse:** Many of them do not care deeply enough about it even to be in the House to debate it.

One reason why an increasing number of Canadians are aroused to oppose the government on this issue is that this bill is striking at what should be the basic personal freedom of every Canadian. There are so few areas of life in which the ordinary citizen has some control left that surely what he does with his spare time should be left to him. This is a free country for all. Surely it is a country in which the ordinary citizen will have at least the freedom to choose what football teams he can look at in his spare time. Yet, we have a government which is saying: "Oh, no, the ordinary citizen, especially the citizen in Toronto, will not have that freedom; it is the government that will decide that." In fact, the government is bringing in legislation that will determine that.

What has amazed me is the way this government, which over the past several months has said that there is absolutely nothing they can do to combat inflation, to regulate the price of housing or to help the ordinary citizen cope with the cost of living, on this issue finds that there is much they can do. On this issue the members of this government certainly have "muscle". They cannot do much about inflation, housing, and so many things that now confront Canadians, but on football, ah, that is where they are really big.

It is clear that this country may have a cabinet, but it does not have a government with a sense of priorities. If the government really had a sense of priorities, the last bill that they would want to bring in now is the one that they have brought before us for this debate. Surely they would have dealt in a realistic way with the problems that truly challenge us today.

I know that throughout the afternoon and evening members of the government have been urging an end to this debate because the debate embarrasses them. But we also know that because of this bill they have lost whatever

[Mr. Stackhouse.]

shred of confidence the public has in them. While they may, because of their party discipline and because of the alliance they have with the socialists, be able to ram this bill through when a vote is taken, they are certainly on the wrong side of this issue so far as public opinion is concerned, particularly in the Toronto area.

Therefore, in this debate we want to challenge the government to show a greater sense of priorities. They have said: Bring the debate to an end if you do not think it is really a vital issue. But the question I put to them is: If this debate had ended a few hours ago, would they have brought in something to deal with the problem of inflation or to deal with housing? Oh, no, they would simply have brought in some other time filler, which is what this bill has been. They would have brought in some other substitute for legislation, for the inaction that has characterized them.

So we say that if ever there is anything that justifies the lack of public confidence in this government as shown in the public opinion polls, and before long to be apparent at the election polls, it is this kind of masquerade, this kind of burlesque which the government has perpetrated on parliament and the people of Canada.

Some hon. Members: Question.

**Mr. J. H. Horner (Crowfoot):** Mr. Speaker, before the House makes a decision on the second reading of this quite important bill I would like to take some time to say a word or two on whether or not the government is taking the right step in controlling entertainment. The question is not whether I as a young Canadian—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

**Mr. Horner (Crowfoot):**—believe that football is a sacred sport or whether I as a somewhat handicapped young Canadian should be protected from entering into that game. I do not think that is the question. I do not think we should equate football, which needs greater protection for the young Canadian, with baseball, hockey or soccer. I think that we as Canadians have proven over the past number of years that we are able to participate fully in all major sports, whether it be hockey, soccer, baseball or football.

I was very interested to hear the minister remark that we do not have a professional baseball league. I thought back to the number of baseball games I played and the number of times I asked myself whether some time there could be a professional baseball league that I could break into. Then I thought of the city of Calgary which had attempted to establish a major professional league but failed to draw a sufficient audience to pay the salaries of the members of that league. Then I thought of the baseball tournaments in the province of Saskatchewan. There really are professional baseball tournaments in western Canada today. I thought of the Battleford Beavers, the baseball players that they hire from the United States to play in the Lacombe tournaments. Then I thought of the baseball teams from Moose Jaw, Sceptre and Unity, Saskatchewan, that came to play in the baseball tournaments in Alberta and took away top money.

May I call it ten o'clock?