

Canadian Professional Football

An hon. Member: Why don't you make a speech tonight?

Mr. Baker: I do not want to prolong the point, Mr. Speaker, but if the hon. member wants to read something I suggest he turn to the comic page where he might find something which is equal to the relevance of this bill in respect of Canadian context and conditions.

Before being interrupted by the hon. member for Nipissing (Mr. Blais) I was about to call attention to the speech made in this House by the hon. member for Greenwood (Mr. Brewin). I think that was one of the most thoughtful speeches I have heard in respect of the elements which are or ought to be the minds of members in respect of this bill.

That hon. member laid out six very important points which ought to be considered by hon. members, some of which I have touched upon. He said that this bill could not by any stretch of the imagination be construed as an attempt to defend anything cultural. He called that a phony aspect of the considerations of this bill. He said that this legislation would be futile in respect to protecting the Canadian Football League, which every member of this House wants to see flourish. The point is that this bill will not protect that league. He went on to say, and I think this is a most important part of his speech, that this government is denying to Canadians the basic right of viewing sports in the manner they wish.

If you look at the restrictive provisions of this bill you will find that they are restrictions which you cannot find in any other piece of legislation. All in all, the bill is bad. It is an irrelevant piece of legislation which will not carry out the object the framers of the bill would like everyone to believe it will carry out. The bill encroaches upon the rights of Canadians in respect of the field of entertainment in a way no other government has ever seen fit to do. The bill puts this parliament into a position where it is invading a field it has no right to be in.

As pointed out by the hon. member for St. Paul's (Mr. Atkey), there is a real question as to the constitutionality of the powers of this bill, and there is certainly a question as to the propriety of the powers it purports to give to the government.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, in the face of all the problems confronting this country, with people crying out for a reasonable choice of housing at a reasonable cost, people asking the government to devote its priorities to land banking in order to increase the supply of serviced land and to engage in a dramatic program of servicing acres of land so there will be adequate land for housing, in an age when the people of Canada are saying to this government that because of inflation they do not know where they are going to be next year and do not know whether labour contracts negotiated this year will be relevant, at a time when the whole system of bargaining in respect of the Public Service is breaking down and becoming irrelevant because it is slow, cumbersome and unresponsive to needs, at a time when the Minister of Transport (Mr. Marchand) has indicated his department is in difficulties in supplying hopper cars for the movement of grain in Canada, when his airline, for whatever reason, is not functioning and is tying up transportation, and at a time when post office workers have decided, rightly or

[Mr. Blais.]

wrongly, to withhold their services, we in this House are discussing football!

An hon. Member: You are delaying.

Mr. Baker: Let me say to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Cafik) that the government which he supports sets the priority for legislation in this House, and if that government had its priorities right we would not have started to debate this bill. But having started this debate we intend to make sure that we do not become the unofficial lackeys of this government by doing what it has suggested.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

An hon. Member: Let it come to a vote.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Baker: I am obviously getting home to some hon. members over there. I note that the hon. member for Ontario (Mr. Cafik) has suddenly broken his notable silence. Perhaps I have knocked a few apples out of his tree. Certainly he looks decidedly uncomfortable.

An hon. Member: We don't want to waste time.

Mr. Baker: I should like to hear his views in respect of this bill.

An hon. Member: Let's have a vote.

Mr. Baker: I would also like to hear from the hon. member for Eglinton, the Secretary of State for External Affairs (Mr. Sharp).

Mr. Cafik: Would the hon. member permit a question?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Boulanger): Does the hon. member for Grenville-Carleton (Mr. Baker) agree to answer a question?

Mr. Cafik: I have a very simple question I should like to direct to the hon. member. I can understand the frustration of anyone on any subject, but if he believes there are other priorities—and I do believe there are other things more important than this—

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cafik: —would the hon. member recommend to his colleagues that we bring this debate to a conclusion by voting one way or the other?

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, we have just had the first ray of light in respect of the attitude of this government. At last a responsible supporter of the government, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare, has admitted for the record that there are more important things to debate than football.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Cafik: I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Some hon. Members: Sit down.

Mr. Baker: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is merely—