

Sports Pool Corporation

the Medical Research Council. In further debate the then Hon. Member for Selkirk-Interlake, Mr. Sargeant, on April 19, 1983, made this observation of the impact of organizations such as this sports pool:

What is the nature of the Minister's voluntary taxation—his non-tax source of revenue? For one thing, it is a form of taxation that takes proportionately more from the poor than it does from the rich.

When one thinks about it, it is not really surprising that it is the poor and not the rich who fall for other Government betting schemes. Lotteries, this sports pool and other government-run gambling are turning millions of Canadians into gamblers. The rags to riches, easy money outlook bred by lottery advertising is naturally appealing to poorer Canadians.

He added some observations about the people who tend to buy lottery tickets and presumably participate in the sports pools:

A 1977 profile commissioned by Loto Canada found that 54 per cent of the buyers of lottery tickets earned less than \$20,000 a year. A similar study conducted by Gallup found that 73 per cent of people who earned less than \$6,000 a year took part in Wintario.

That in my province of Ontario is another dimension of the cause for concern that we feel in our caucus about the proposal which the previous government put on the law books and the pool it created.

Let me quote one more member of my caucus, the Hon. Member for Beaches (Mr. Young), as follows:

I always considered support for arts and culture and support for medical and health research to be a responsibility in the best interest of Canadians as a whole and certainly Canada as a society. I considered this to be a responsibility of all Canadians not just those people at the low end of the income scale who may be tempted because of the economic conditions in which they find themselves as a result of government policy to try to find a way out of those difficulties by buying dreams through the kinds of programs about which the Government is talking. That is what the Government is doing. It is selling dreams. The chances or the odds of an individual who participates in that kind of activity, these lotteries or sports pools, actually coming out a winner are decidedly low.

The debate in the last Parliament was fascinating on that point as Members considered the likelihood with which one might be struck by lightning; it is twice as likely as winning a lottery. That does not prevent the organizers of lotteries from spotlighting every successful winner in order to encourage people, particularly the unfortunate, to take part in these lotteries.

What I found fascinating was the fact that members of the then Conservative Opposition felt the same way about these matters. You will understand, Mr. Speaker, why I look particularly at the Hon. Member for Provencher (Mr. Epp) and the Hon. Member for Halton in making these comments. There really is some fascinating material here which I rather regret was not put on the record at any length this morning. The Hon. Minister referred to strong views but he did not really give us the depth and strength of those views while speaking to the Bill presently before us. When he spoke on November 18, 1982 as an opposition member, the Minister said:

We are being asked today by this Government to accept a Bill which allows the federal Government to get back into the gaming industry. What we are debating here today is action which in 1970 was illegal. In 1970 it was prohibited by virtue of the Canadian Criminal Code. Suddenly after ten or 12 years we not only have had legalized gambling, government-sponsored—in fact governments being beneficiaries of that gambling—but gambling has become a part of the

Canadian pattern. Today we seem to say that we have to increase this new source of revenue, not because we want to justify that new source, but because the Government needs it for valid programs. It is based on this theory that the ends justify the means.

I did not at the outset mean to parrot him, but I do not think I could have said it any better concerning my own repugnance at what has happened in Canadian society since these amendments to the Criminal Code. I am sorry that the proposal before us this morning is only the abolition of one of those bodies. The Minister, then simply the Hon. Member for Provencher, went on to say:

The carrot is put forward to the people, Mr. Speaker, that they might somehow get out of the economic difficulties in which they find themselves by buying one chance, one hope which somehow might extricate them from the daily living that is faced by most Canadians. It is a fantasy based on advertising, glib, glossy advertising, the kind that, if corporations used it, many of us in this House would get up and argue borders very closely on false advertising, if in fact it is not false advertising. But because governments do it, somehow there is legitimacy. I suggest that is wrong.

I heartily agree. I do not think it could have been said better by a member of our caucus.

Mr. Deans: Oh, maybe marginally.

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay-Nipigon): Marginally. The Hon. Minister would always be welcome over here, perhaps, Mr. House Leader.

Mr. Deans: For a visit.

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay-Nipigon): For a visit. Well, there may be something to extract from that a little later. The Hon. Member for Halton also had some fascinating observations to make:

At the outset, I would like to say that this sports pool is nothing more than an indirect taxation by devious ways and means. It is an underhanded way of collecting money from the Canadian public because the Government has failed in its responsibility time and time again to collect it by normal means.

That is a splendid statement, one which I do not intend to allow the Hon. Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport to forget in this Parliament. It is one we might inscribe in an appropriate place and keep constantly spotlighted, as is done in a stadium when the great athletes are performing, in order to be sure we do not forget it.

• (1250)

He went on to comment on the proposal before the House on this day in late June of 1983 by saying the following:

As a former athlete I support anything which can be done to help amateur athletes in this country. But certainly not by establishing the phony, sleazy programs the Government is talking about which would be taking advantage primarily of the poor people of this nation, and then misleading them with false and misleading advertising.

That was splendidly spoken. With those comments on the record from both of the Opposition Parties in preceding Parliaments, I regretted this morning that the Minister's observations did not in fact extend to these considerations. I was disappointed to see him focusing particularly on the federal-provincial ramifications of all of this. He is concerned about the pursuit of the policy which the government of 1979