

Athletic Contests and Events Pools Act

Therefore, it is with great pleasure that I second the motion and request that the Government support motion No. 4.

Mr. Otto Jelinek (Halton): Mr. Speaker, I would just like to make a few comments on Bill C-95 in respect to the sports pool and motion No. 4 moved by my colleague in respect to the Auditor General taking over the accountability of this sports pool program. In fact, I would hope that Parliament would see fit to study the possibility of the Auditor General being accountable to this House for all Government agencies and Crown corporations, and therefore to the Canadian public.

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. I would like to mention three examples of the devious ways in which this Government has handled the situation from the outset. On June 26, 1981 I asked a question of the then Minister responsible for fitness and amateur sport, and I will quote my whole question because it puts this whole sports pool into perspective. I said:

● (1620)

Madam Speaker, my question is directed to the minister of fitness and amateur sport. When the original Olympic lottery was introduced in order to defray the costs of the Montreal Olympics, the Liberal Government at that time gave Canadians and the House its assurances that no further lotteries or gambling operations would be initiated. That promise, as the minister knows, has already been broken. It has now come to my attention that the minister is well on his way to extending federal gambling programs to what is known as all-sports betting, in other words, reducing the Government to the status of bookies for betting on hockey games, football games and so on. Without once again copping out by giving a stock answer blaming the previous Government, can the minister confirm or deny whether his Government is contemplating such action?

The Minister's response was:

I would inform the Hon. Member that the Government has no such plans. We do not contemplate any such scheme as the Hon. Member has mentioned.

Three days later, Mr. Speaker, I produced a sample of a sports pool ticket in this House and showed it to the Minister. He had to agree that they were studying some form of gambling operation but he was not sure whether that was it and he in fact had not seen that ticket. So the Minister was either deliberately misleading the House three days earlier, or he was totally ignorant of what went on in his own Department.

To show you the devious ways and means this Government has used to handle this situation from the beginning, less than three months later, on September 14, that same Minister announced very proudly that the federal Government, the Liberals, were going to introduce a sports pool betting scheme along the lines I suggested he was planning less than three months earlier when he denied it. That is why I call it devious ways and means.

Point number two, Mr. Speaker, is advertising. We have talked about the cost of advertising sports pools and gambling operations by this Government, but there is also misleading advertising. I take you back to December 6, 1976, when I informed the then Minister of Consumer and Corporate

Affairs, Mr. Abbott, that the ads for Loto Canada at that time were so misleading that a Canadian is twice as likely to be hit by lightning than he is to win \$1 million in that gambling operation. The Minister said that he agreed there was excessive and misleading use of advertising. He said it was exaggerated optimism. He also said that he did not plan to get tough about the ads even though he considered them inappropriate, unfair and in bad taste. He said that while he did not think the ads were misleading, they tend to raise expectations in the public mind which are unjustified. He was then removed from that position and we never heard any further about any changes made in that regard. Again, an example of devious ways and means of promoting federal gambling operations.

A third point, which is probably the most important and comes to the root of this whole problem, is that lottery operations were agreed to by Parliament to defray the cost of the Montreal Olympics in 1976. There was a lot of debate about this and we received all kinds of assurances from the Liberal Government that once those costs were defrayed there would no longer be any attempt by the Liberal administration or Parliament to bring in gambling operations under sports pools or lotteries or any such nonsense. Those were outright lies by the Government at that time because, as you know, Mr. Speaker, the lottery defrayed the cost of the Montreal Olympics but then the name was changed to Loto Canada and the rest is history.

When Hon. Members opposite say that we on this side do not care about helping the arts and amateur athletes, that is the furthest from the truth. 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.

There are other ways to help amateur athletes in this country other than through lotteries and sports pools or indeed even large Government grants. First we should try to expand sponsorship by the private sector of amateur sports programs and the arts. We could expand the development fees which the NHL is now paying towards the development of junior hockey players. That makes sense. But we are not going far enough. What about figure skaters, as I once was? I spent all my time learning that sport in this country. Today the federal Government is subsidizing Sports Canada, rightly so, for the development of figure skaters and other sports, but then the cream of the figure skaters are taken away by foreign professional ice shows which do not give anything back to the taxpayer in this country to develop figure skaters. Surely there is a golden opportunity for this Parliament to go to the Ice Capades, Holiday on Ice and Ice Follies and say that every time they hire one of our skaters trained here in Canada, surely they must pay something back. The same thing is true in tennis and other professional sports.