

**Mr. Baker:** When a Member of Parliament sees a piece of bad, ill-timed legislation, he ought not to sit in his seat because some football player on the other side says he should. I did not come to this House to give what might be considered tacit support to ill-timed, bad legislation. I say to the government in all seriousness that there is nothing which indicates more clearly its lack of relevance with respect to the problems of the day than the pig-headed, wrong-headed effort it is making in connection with this legislation. Particularly is this so today, when I note that 2,000 employees of Air Canada have been laid off, inflation is rampant, and the postal unions are so disgusted with the archaic and dinosaur-like methods of the government in bargaining with the Civil Service that they are prepared to withhold their services. This is a time when the Postmaster General (Mr. Ouellet) should be directing his attention toward mediation, instead of publishing a stupid advertisement two days running which only inflames the situation.

That is typical of a government which has chosen to bring forward a bill of the kind before us, ignoring the national issues which are concerning our people. We do not intend to be party to that kind of irrelevancy and ineptitude. If ever there was a monument to government ineptitude, it is the present bill introduced at this time.

A great deal of reference has been made to the views of Mr. Russell Jackson, a Canadian who made his way in football without assistance from the government opposite or from any government. Mr. Jackson's name has been used in this chamber on many occasions. He put his opinion clearly when he said:

I just think that if the CFL is too weak to face this kind of competition, we are going to lose it eventually anyway. If it can't compete without government legislation, then some other league, some other team such as the Northmen, or some other sport entirely, will knock it out.

That is a statement by a man who knows Canadian football. It might be pointed out again that the legislation before us will not help the Canadian Football League. Many reasons have been advanced in the course of the debate and I shall not repeat them. Not a single speaker from the government side, including the minister, has shown us how this legislation will help Canadian football. I am not prepared to take the government's word for it because this is the same government which told us there was a fuel shortage in Canada and then went on to make a wasteful purchase of Roumanian oil, after which we found out there was not a shortage at all.

The people I represent in this House say there are two real issues which concern us. First, there is the irrelevance of the government's action at this time. They say it is not proper, in the face of the urgent problems now before the country, that parliament should be dealing with football. I concur in that view. The second thing they say is that parliament has more important things to do.

**An hon. Member:** Right! So sit down and we will vote on it.

**Mr. Baker:** As a matter of propriety, parliament ought not to be injecting itself into the field of professional sport. That is the second consideration. They say the government does have a mandate with respect to amateur

### *Canadian Professional Football*

sport, a role to play in terms of helping to secure the participation of the greatest possible number of Canadians in sport and fitness programs. The appearance of this bill, and the pressure the government has applied, indicate how it has failed in carrying out that mandate.

There is a lot to be done in the field of amateur sport. All of us, I believe, have a feeling of gratification, a sense of obligation toward those who engage in the coaching of young players, and a sense of pride in the achievement of those who take part in amateur sports. Those who work with boys and girls, helping them to participate, are the unsung heroes of sport in Canada. These people are being neglected as a result of the government's preoccupation with a field in which it has no real reason to be active. Think of the shortage of playgrounds in Canada, the shortage of equipment, the fact that there are not enough arenas.

When I think of the great value there is in figure skating, soccer, lacrosse and hockey on the amateur level, and of the thousands of young people who are involved in these sports, and weigh this against the preoccupation of the Minister of National Health and Welfare (Mr. Lalonde) with professional sport, I begin to wonder how the priorities of the government are arranged. Where is its sense of relevancy? Where is its sense of urgency? I come to the conclusion that the government is out of touch.

**Mr. Gillies:** What is the position of the Secretary of State for External Affairs?

**Mr. Sharp:** I am not going to waste the time of the House.

**Mr. Gillies:** It is you over there who brought the bill in. You are caught with it anyway.

**Mr. Baker:** I, for one, intend to vote against this legislation, and I invite other members of the House who feel that important issues in Canada are being neglected to mark that feeling by their own votes. The other alternative is for members who have some influence with the minister to go to him and tell him it is not too late for him to withdraw this piece of irrelevancy. I do not want to disturb the hon. member for Nipissing (Mr. Blais) while he is reading his newspaper over there, but I do think that he, as a member who has from time to time made statements in this House on matters of importance and relevance, should be one of those expressing to the minister his concern with respect to the bill in front of us.

● (2030)

I commend, as did my colleague the hon. member for Vancouver South (Mr. Fraser)—

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

**An hon. Member:** You were reading your paper; don't deny it.

**Mr. Blais:** Mr. Speaker, I was reading the newspaper in an attempt to find any report of intelligent remarks by the press gallery in respect of anything that was being said by the opposition members on this bill.

**Some hon. Members:** Hear, hear!