

Olympic Boycott

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta): Madam Speaker, there have been hundreds of families who have booked their vacations for Moscow to coincide with the Olympics, particularly families of competing athletes. Some of these have invested several thousand dollars in advance on pre-paid bookings with tour companies. They are charters, and some of these people are now losing their entire investments because the deadline for refund has passed, and maybe in some cases it has passed because of the delay in the announcement by this government.

Mr. Clark: No question.

Mr. Friesen: I would like to ask the minister if this Liberal government has done anything about bringing pressure to bear on these tour companies to make sure that they will refund the money that they have been using now for several months. They have been using money received from families which can ill afford to invest in a package which they will never be able to use. Is the government doing anything to make sure that these companies, such as Sears and others, will refund that money to those families, which cannot afford this kind of wasted expenditure?

Mr. MacGuigan: Madam Speaker, when a decision on public policy is made, it is not always possible to compensate all the citizens who may lose as a result. That is often the case because it is not possible to identify them or to determine what their losses really are, or it might be too expensive for the public purse, but I think my hon. friend has made a suggestion which is worthy of investigation. I can at least assure him that we will look at that problem to see what the dimensions of it may be.

Mr. Friesen: The minister suggests that I am asking that funds be expended. I am not asking that. I am not asking the government to lay out any money. All I am asking is that it use its good offices, if they are that, to bring pressure to bear on those companies to make sure these families get their money back.

● (1730)

Mr. MacGuigan: Perhaps I was overly suspicious as to the thought lurking in my hon. friend's mind. I certainly think we can have a discussion on behalf of the government with these organizations, and if there is no further commitment than that, then I think I can give him the assurance that we can do that.

Mr. Mark Rose (Mission-Port Moody): Madam Speaker, in addition to admitting in his statement that the boycott was not likely to have much effect on changing the Soviet position in Afghanistan, the minister tried to make the point on page two of his statement that, in addition to athletes, other segments of the Canadians society will be making certain kinds of sacrifices as a result of the government's decision. He mentioned that ministers will not be allowed to go to the Soviet Union as frequently as they did previously, and the same applies to other high officials. I do not know if that is much of

a sacrifice. He called on sports federations and some cultural groups to restrict themselves similarly.

What concerns some of us is that farmers and businessmen, to name a few others besides the ones already mentioned, will be asked to bear what, it is implied, is an equivalent burden to that of the athletes. Can the minister tell the House what specific sacrifices he is asking Canadian farmers to make in expressing Canada's outrage? Perhaps he might also care to elaborate on what he is asking the commercial or business interests in this country to do.

Mr. MacGuigan: Certainly, Madam Speaker. I should mention that we are following the policies established by the previous government. We have adopted those policies as our own. There is quite an array of measures in place but, to be more specific about the ones to which my hon. friend refers, and I think he has in mind potential losses of the business community, that would largely be with respect to export permits for goods or materials of strategic significance. So far permits have been denied to two Canadian firms, and there is an apparent loss of export contracts by four other Canadian firms. The combined value of these losses has been estimated at \$6 million. I would think that my hon. friend would be aware of the fact that we have been limiting our grain exports to the Soviet Union to traditional levels. As I think is well known, so far they have not sustained any losses as a result of that.

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. MacGuigan: They have not sustained any losses in terms of volume because we are at the traditional level. But there is a potential loss situation there as well.

Mr. Rose: I wonder if the minister could be more specific as to the nature of the six firms he mentioned. Did any of them include high technology contracts, and has the minister considered withdrawing certain lines of credit for continued expansion of trade with the Soviet Union when he was considering other sanctions? It is my view, and also that of my colleagues, that the massive burden of expressing Canada's outrage falls on the high profile athletes in the Olympic Games, and we consider that unfair. If the athletes will be expected to bear this burden on behalf of their country or else be considered unpatriotic, then I think equivalent burdens should fall on other segments of society, and we have no confidence, on the basis of the minister's statement, that indeed they have.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. MacGuigan: I do not have with me the names of those firms. I will attempt to get them for the hon. member. But I think he should also take account of the fact that a great number of scientific, academic, and cultural exchanges have been cancelled, affecting hundreds of Canadians who were looking forward to various kinds of opportunities, from scientists from the National Research Council to others. If hon. members would wish to address a question to me that I can