

I am saying that over the years we have tried to establish our national team. Father Bauer tried to establish it over one decade ago. We tried to take on the Allan Cup champions and the team could not keep up with them. You run into a difficult situation in competing with what are salaried and professional teams in Europe, something we cannot get across to Bunny Ahearne and others. One ought to point out, if we are to consider this motion seriously, that passing the motion will not enable us to meet all the requirements in this field.

Concern over this question has been generating through the years. That concern came to a head long before the showdown last year in which we came through in the final minutes. It came to a head with the task force report on sports and brought about the creation of Hockey Canada. Hockey Canadian fact represents all the groups in hockey. Hockey Canada is classified under the category of institutions to which one can make donations which are tax deductible. I think that is an excellent idea.

Perhaps one of the good things to come out of this motion might be the suggestion to Team Canada that they start a major fund-raising drive to support the team which is envisaged in the motion. The money so raised could be put into the kitty and, together with the funds derived from the games which would follow in which our best professional players would be used as they were last year, could then be disbursed in order to encourage amateur hockey across Canada.

It is a fact of life that if you want to employ a salaried team it will be classed as professional, and that rules you out of the International Ice Hockey Federation and out of the Olympic Games. So where will you use such a Team Canada. With whom will they compete? We could get the very best players and pay them wages which are above those paid by the NHL and the WHA. However, if the public which loves this sport so much was not able to watch such a team competing with teams in the NHL and WHA, at least not in the regular season—I do not know how one could arrange these games, although perhaps they could be arranged in the off season or in the training season—how could one hold such a team together?

Surely we should be spending millions of dollars for a team that was not at its best. It could not really compete in Canada and keep up with the rest of the teams playing, and meanwhile it could not compete internationally either in International Ice Hockey Federation games or in the Olympics. So I suggest that although there is a great deal of merit to this motion, there is no need now to establish a national endowment fund contributions to which would be tax deductible. I suggest that if we employed a salaried team that would rule us out in Canada and in Europe.

May I make one final point. A member of the New Democratic Party supported the motion. He suggested that the hon. member for Niagara Falls (Mr. Hueglin) recognized that sometimes the public sector can compete successfully with private enterprise, and therefore he was especially pleased to support this motion. I think we are entering very dangerous territory if we end up with a government-supported team. Instead of the independent body, Hockey Canada, being responsible in this field it might be the government which had a direct role to play. The government might be responsible for a team that

Sports

could compete with our own national teams or with international teams.

If it were to fail internationally, we might end up with an election campaign in which the issues might not compete with hockey for attention but in which hockey might be a predominant topic for discussion, at the expense of other issues which are of vital importance but which may not receive such widespread public attention as hockey.

In conclusion, may I read a few sentences from "A summary of the organizational development, activities and achievements of Hockey Canada, January, 1969, to May, 1972." I will not read it all; I merely wish to put the following on record:

Hockey Canada is an organization established early in 1969 to achieve the following objectives:

1. To develop, operate, and manage a national hockey team or teams to represent Canada internationally.
2. To foster and support the playing of hockey in Canada, and in particular, to develop the skill and competence of Canadian hockey players and coaches in co-operation with other hockey organizations.

I think we are looking for a better way to make our system of hockey work. I think Hockey Canada has given us a good start. I am not at all satisfied that the dispute in the private sector between the NHL and the WHA has been resolved to the satisfaction of the Canadian public, but surely that might be done by Hockey Canada which was an initiative of this government.

Mr. Denis Ethier (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell): Mr. Speaker, it is not often in this House that we have the opportunity to discuss such a pleasant piece of legislation or motion. I say this especially as we debated earlier today the bill on capital punishment. That has been a debate in which many members have been carried away emotionally. I am sure there will not be anything emotional about this debate.

May I inform the hon. member for Niagara Falls (Mr. Hueglin) that I share his views regarding the importance of our national sport. I am sure we all remember the high-class entertainment that was provided by Team Canada one year ago. Team Canada demonstrated to the whole world that hockey in Canada is not only a national sport, but that with the event of the Canada-Russia series it has become an international sport. We are very proud that Canada holds the world championship title in this sport. May I take this opportunity to congratulate all the members of Team Canada for their great victory over the Russians.

Our love for hockey and our concern for ensuring its continuity obliges me to take a stand different from that taken by my colleague from Niagara Falls on this motion. A government-sponsored team would bring serious opposition to private enterprise which has provided and is still providing us with our favourite entertainment. Such a team could hinder the financial success of teams in the private sector. Eventually we should see lower salaried players engaged in this sport, which would result in a lower calibre of entertainment. I do not think the hon. member for Niagara Falls wants this to happen, nor does any other Canadian want it to happen.