

• (4:10 p.m.)

The Little League of Canada is an outgrowth of an organization in the United States. The Little League was incorporated in the early 1950s and has its headquarters in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. It is a very good example of an organized group which conducts research, maintains statistics and does its very best to promote the sport with proper regard to safety and the type of equipment that must be developed and provided. It also pays attention to public relations. The activities of the Little League leads to a Little World series which is held in the United States and which we also have in Canada.

The mover of the bill was kind enough to show me a few minutes ago the report on the Little World series which was held on August 20, 21, 22 and 24, 1968, in Williamsport, Pennsylvania. A similar program was held in Canada, and there are pictures of the team at Sherbrooke. The western team at Santa Anna, California, was declared the champion. The Little League is very well recognized. Its players are young people under the age of 16. It has extended into Canada and, I believe, involves 50,000 young people. In my constituency there is a very active organization, and the parents who donate their services to promoting baseball among the younger generation perform a service for which the community has every reason to be thankful. In other words, there is no question in my mind nor, I am sure, in the mind of any member of this House, that the program of the Little League is a wholesome and highly desirable type of activity.

I have several questions which I believe should be asked. The bill before us proposes to designate a Little League Week. About 40 national sports organizations in Canada have at one time or another expressed to the department their interest in a similar type of designation. The hon. member for Regina Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) suggested this would still leave open twelve weeks in the year. It would, but I am sure he would be the first to say that we must have priorities in this regard. It is possible that other worthy causes not related to sports will seek a similar designation. We all agree that there is a limit to how far we can go in designating weeks for this type of cause.

I wish to go on record as wishing that some recognition be given this group. I say that without reservation. But I do not believe our neighbours to the south have yet designated a Little League Week. They operate under a

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national charter and within the last two years they have sought to establish a similar type of organization in Canada. Until two years ago all the funds collected, entry fees, membership fees and insurance premiums, were paid in U.S. funds through the head office in Pennsylvania.

I believe they have taken steps to build a Canadian organization to meet the concern that at one time was expressed on that score. But apart from the basic question of how far we should go in designating the Babe Ruth League, the Little League or the various football leagues and other organizations, I suggest hon. members should think about policy before we make such designation by an act of the House.

The basic question that remains relates to the place of this organization and its structure in Canadian sport.

Parliament has established a National Advisory Council on Fitness and Amateur Sport. There have been discussions at various times to the end that the Little League organization be affiliated with a group which is known as the Canadian Federation of Amateur Baseball. Unfortunately, up to this time no resolution on this matter has been put forward. Funds are provided through the National Advisory Council to assist in a number of activities in Canada, among which is baseball.

There has been no affiliation of the Little League group with any of the established sports organizations that are receiving official or semi-official recognition through the Department of National Health and Welfare. I am not prepared to say that it is necessary that they should do so. I feel that the matter should be discussed and reviewed in an appropriate forum. In other words, if we have a national policy on sports, if we have established grants to encourage and develop various sports activities, the proper question to pose is: What is the relationship of the Little League to the bodies that have been given official or semi-official recognition?

I hope there will be further discussion of this matter. I am confident that there is nothing that cannot be resolved in a fair and amicable way, recognizing that everyone concerned is serving the younger generation, trying to develop activities that are healthy and in which we want our young people to engage.

Another comment that has been made—I simply wish to mention it without associating myself with it—relates to the question of the