

Criminal Code

An hon. member also asked about supervision of the race-track. We were also asked about regulations. We have a good record as far as supervision is concerned. I think the race tracks in Canada are very well supervised, and we want to maintain that.

As far as changes in regulations are concerned, we have changed the amount of take to 15 per cent for small tracks. If the take is too big or if it is too little, we want to be able to adjust that. The racing industry is agreeable to that. They want that so that we do not have to come back to the House every time there is a need for a change. That is the reason for that being included in the bill so we do not have to wait ten years, as we are at the present time. We are waiting ten years to make that change. I do not know if I will be the minister in ten years or not, some people think I have been here too long now—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Whelan: —but let me remind hon. members that there was one minister of agriculture in Canada for 22 years.

Mr. Nielsen: Look what happened to him.

Mr. Whelan: The hon. member for Hamilton Mountain made reference to the importance and the unimportance of this bill. Many others have stated how many thousands of people are involved in the employment in this industry. Inter-track betting will mean more people will be employed. Through the telephone betting system more people will be legitimately employed. The Windsor racetrack, which is not in my constituency but in the constituency next to mine, is already preparing to hire 25 people who will run the system for them. To some people that number may not be significant.

Mr. Nielsen: You are going to talk out your own bill.

Mr. Whelan: I think this is an important bill. It has a chain effect on the amount of people whose jobs depend on the overall racing industry, which is a huge industry.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, is the minister proposing to respond to my question on the protection of the market area of the track? How does he propose to administer that? What about protection of horsemen? Will the minister be introducing any regulations to restrict tracks from reducing the amount of live racing as they increase the amount of inter-track racing?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Chairman, first it has to be agreed that you will have inter-track racing. This can mean the greater use of a facility, for instance, if one track has racing and the other does not. If there is a club room and a dining room a track can use large TV screens in them. It will be the same as watching the races without having to travel 100 miles or 150 miles to a race. People will be able to watch races enjoy a meal at the same time with their family. We say this will have to be worked out with the tracks. Our people will be working very closely to protect the interests of the tracks. Many small tracks have expressed a concern that this may put them out of business. We do not want that. We will be supervising the

situation very closely. The racetrack in Sudbury has no problem because it does not have a track within its boundary. It could join with any other track in southern Ontario and run inter-track betting there all winter long or whenever its racing dates were not on. Tracks are quite eager to participate in that kind of a program.

I cannot take the time to outline all of the ways and means by which we intend to make this as fair as possible and make sure that the racing industry is economically viable. We want it to be successful.

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Chairman, I asked two specific questions. I do not know whether or not the minister does not want to answer them. What about a track that is located in city A that is close to city B, and one has live racing, can the other one have inter-track betting even if it impinges on the market of the track with live racing? Second, will the regulations prohibit a track from reducing the amount of live racing as it increases the amount of inter-track betting?

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Chairman, I am sure the hon. member knows that at the present time we set by negotiation the dates of racing for each track across Canada. Those dates cannot be changed that easily. In fact, they are not changed very much at all. It is only by mutual consent if some track does not want so many days, etc. that those dates are available to another track and transferred. There will not be inter-track betting unless there is agreement between the two tracks.

• (1550)

Mr. Allmand: Mr. Chairman, since the hon. member for Hamilton Mountain referred to my remarks, I think I should clarify the point. I told the House that the statement I made was based upon information which I obtained when I was solicitor general. At that time a good number of chiefs of police in the country argued in favour of off-track betting, not as a means of eliminating illegal betting but as another means of reducing it.

When the minister announced his measures last year, he mentioned the capability of betting by telephone from various areas of the country. For example, under the measures the minister announced, a person could telephone from Hamilton to the track in Fort Erie or to the track in Toronto to place bets. Consequently this would help reduce illegal betting in Hamilton. Of course this could be done in Peterborough or other places as well, not through the bill particularly, but through the other measures announced by the minister.

Mr. Whelan: Mr. Chairman, the Conservative House leader wanted a date for the proclamation of the bill. I am told by my officials that it may not be possible before approximately six weeks for it to go through all the rigamarole it goes through and for it to be proclaimed.

Clause 2 agreed to.

Title agreed to.

The Assistant Deputy Chairman: Shall I report the bill?