

*Criminal Code*

Bill which makes certain amendments to the Criminal Code to legislate and set in statute form the consequences of agreements which the Conservative Government reached. These were initially arrived at in 1979, and the Conservatives chose to implement them as soon as they formed the Government in late summer, 1984.

In speaking to this Bill, Mr. Speaker, I will be taking a stance of support for the Bill. I do that in a carefully defined way because it expresses support for the principle that the federal Government is removed from gaming activity in Canada. By this change in the statute law, the Government declares that it will not embark on any endeavours like Loto Canada, which was authorized in the mid-1970s, and the sports pool Bill, which was undertaken in 1982-83. That action, of removing the federal Government from gaming activity, is supported by members of my caucus who regard it as a desirable action.

I recognize that the clauses before us in Bill C-81 provide for other gaming activities to continue in Canada, particularly those in which the provinces, through a number of lottery corporations, are now largely embarked upon. That those clauses are in the Bill gives me considerable cause for unease.

Support for the Bill is partial. The Bill reprints sections of the Criminal Code which are not being changed. The fact that they are in the Bill is the focus for the unease I am expressing.

I want to say something about this matter of gaming and lotteries on which the Government of Canada allowed the provinces to embark and which the Canadian Government in 1978-79 attempted to get into more actively in trying to establish Loto Canada and later the sports pool.

The fact that the Canadian Government was prepared to consider gambling money as a support for fitness and amateur sport activities, for cultural activities and conceivably even for the funding of medical research, gave all Canadians concern about morality. The social implications of this Government action gave very real cause for concern.

● (1600)

I suggest that these are all important areas of activity. I think we would concede that immediately. I doubt whether there is a person in the country who would doubt the importance of medical research. There are people who would have varying assessments of the importance of cultural activity or, for that matter, of fitness and amateur sport, but I would expect most Canadians to place a fairly high value upon these activities. Given that there is this agreement among Canadians about the importance of such endeavours, it is my conviction and that of my colleagues that those activities deserve to be supported by the consolidated revenues of the country and by a proper tax system. Governments should not, in any way, shape or form, be involved in supporting these endeavours by calling upon non-tax revenues.

Given that kind of position, the Government is putting before us today, as it put before us in the sports pool wind-up Bill, a Bill that is only to be supported because of its half-way nature. What one wanted, in fact, was for the Government to

concede that gaming is not a good thing, and to ensure that the provinces as well got out of the activity and that the provincial Governments and the federal Government used a sound tax system to generate the revenues to support these important endeavours.

It may be worth saying, in some expansion on that, that this point deserves to be underscored for fitness and amateur sport. I suspect that there are people who regard that as, in some way, a luxurious activity. I am not sure whether I am finding the right words for it, but they do not regard it as an important thing in the mainstream of our life with which Government should be directly involved. They do not appreciate the importance of supporting amateur sport properly and ensuring in our fitness programs that Canadians use their leisure well. The Government has a real stake, which certainly extends to the health of the participants and to the increasing health of the Canadian public. It actually exceeds that and involves the well-being, far beyond physical health, of the Canadian population. Given the importance that one can place on the Ministry of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport, it is all the more important that both aspects of that Ministry be properly supported. It is imperative that the consolidated revenues of the country be adequately called upon to support all these activities.

For that reason, the decision of the Governments, at either level, federally or provincially, to call upon gaming revenues or the results of lotteries to support these activities creates a sense of their own improper evaluation of these activities and represents something to which I am deeply opposed. I think that feeling is shared by all members of my caucus.

The fact of the matter is that others, including Ministers of the present Government, feel quite the same way. Perhaps I could drop back for a moment and note that when I spoke on November 8, 1984, I used a statement by one of the venerable members of my Party, who was then the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North Centre, Mr. Knowles, whom we have the pleasure of seeing at the Table frequently in the chair which he now holds by action of the last Parliament. I quoted the following statement of Mr. Knowles:

It is because we believe that physical fitness, amateur sport and recreation are important aspects of Canadian life that we think they should be financed out of general taxation and, therefore, paid for on the basis of the ability to pay.

We do not believe that aspects of life as important as physical fitness, amateur sport and recreation should be financed by gambling, which calls on the poor to pay for it, instead of taxation which is levied according to ability to pay.

That admirable statement from 1976 was echoed in the most impressive way by the Hon. Member for Halton, the present Minister of State for Fitness and Amateur Sport (Mr. Jelinek). Speaking on the sports pool Bill three years ago, he said:

At the outset, I would like to say that this sports pool is nothing more than an indirect taxation by devious ways and means. It is an underhanded way of collecting money from the Canadian public because the Government has failed in its responsibility time and time again to collect it by normal means.

He added to that admirable statement of principle, to which I hold myself, the following observation: