

• (1220)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The hon. parliamentary secretary earlier referred to the possibility that members might be agreeable to putting the bill through all stages today, including the Committee of the Whole. The Chair put the motion as referring to second reading and reference to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs. I take it that there is unanimous consent that that ought to be amended so that the motion reads "and reference to Committee of the Whole". Is that agreed?

Some hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Blaker): The Chair has some indication that hon. members wish to speak. I just want to point out that, given that correction of the motion, members may prefer to speak to second reading or to Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Chuck Cook (North Vancouver-Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, first, I would like to compliment the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan) on a speech with which I basically agree. Some of his comments with respect to off-track betting I found offensive but basically his remarks were quite proper and I have no hesitation in endorsing them.

I would begin by saying I have got hoofprints on my heart. I have a mother who was born in the Kentucky blue grass country and a father off an Ontario farm. I guess horse racing, by choice as well as being hereditary, is in my blood. My mother used to take me to all the western movies when I was a little boy to see Ken Maynard, Tom Mix, Roy Rogers and Gene Autrey.

Mr. Wilson: What about Hopalong Cassidy?

Mr. Cook: Hopalong Cassidy too. I thought she was taking me to the movies because she wanted to see the "shoot-em-ups", as I did. It was later, after I grew up, that I found out that she wanted to watch the horses instead. My first trip to a race track was when I was ten years old and I went with my mother. I have been returning to them ever since. Polo Park in Winnipeg certainly saw a good deal of me during my teenage years.

I make those remarks in advance to indicate from whence I am coming in regard to this bill. The purpose of the amendment to the Criminal Code is to permit inter-track pari-mutuel betting on horse races, thereby enabling a person to make a bet in person or by telephone at one racecourse in respect of a race being run at another racecourse. The amendment would also remove the requirement that bets on horse races be made only during the actual progress of the race meeting. It thereby permits advance betting on horse racing to be conducted in accordance with regulations made under subsection 188(7) of the Criminal Code.

What does this really mean when we remove the legal language from it? First, it means telephone betting. How will this operate? The first requirement is that you must deposit your money in advance. You open an account, similar to a bank account, at your favourite racetrack. You give your

Criminal Code

name, you receive a number for the account and you will have a code word so that there is at least a double check to ensure that no one can use your account and make bets which are unauthorized by you. Therefore, you phone the racetrack, give them your account number and your code word and the telephone operator will tell you how much money you have on deposit. At that point, you indicate to the operator what horse, what race and what amount you wish to bet. This is then recorded and entered into the mutuel system of the race track.

There is one other double check which is absolutely necessary and which is done. The entire conversation is recorded and maintained. Therefore, if you later discover that a mistake has been made, all that is necessary is to make an application to the racetrack and it will retrieve the tape recording of the telephone conversation which will absolutely determine if a mistake was made. It is a system which we are adopting in Canada that has worked very successfully in the states of Connecticut, New York, Kentucky and Florida. It seems to be almost fail safe and is working extremely well. This is a necessary part of the system.

The other aspect concerns inter-track betting. This means that in my province of British Columbia, for example, there can be a link-up between Exhibition Park and Cloverdale Raceway, a link-up between Sandown race track on Vancouver Island and perhaps some other smaller tracks in the interior which may wish to participate in such a scheme.

In Ontario, it would mean link-ups for Woodbine, Fort Erie and Greenwood, which are three typical examples. The only racing dates in the months of August in Ontario are held at the Fort Erie race track. Fort Erie, with its flowers and lawns, is one of the most beautiful race tracks in North America.

I am pleased with this legislation because it will give the Fort Erie track a real opportunity to survive as a viable race track with all of the employment it provides in the Fort Erie area. Under inter-track betting during the month of August, the Ontario Jockey Club may, if it so decides, open a portion of the clubhouse at Woodbine or at Greenwood where racing will not be taking place in the afternoon but where the racing fans of Toronto may then be able to go to watch the races being run in Fort Erie on large-screen television and also be able to bet on those races. Of course, this means considerably more employment in the Toronto area as additional staff will be required to operate those tracks.

It is also a considerable benefit to those who are most interested in the racing game. I might add that it also means that Blue Bonnet in the Province of Quebec as well as other tracks in that province will now survive. We should be thankful for that because Blue Bonnet is too much of an institution in Quebec to be turned into a shopping centre.

I believe that the statistics on racing would be shocking to many people who do not understand just how large an industry it is. I will relate a number of figures just for the province of British Columbia alone to indicate to my constituents what we are talking about. There are 3,000 thoroughbred and standard-bred breeders in Canada. There are 450 breeders in British