

Criminal Code

religious organizations, social clubs and churches to raise the funds they are unable to obtain through other means in the present situation. In our crazy set-up, we must tolerate that the parish priest ask his flock to play bingo. But the principle does not change. That does not improve the living conditions of the people as a whole. That does not put money into circulation, but further taxes the people in order to enable a few to make some very short-lived gains. That does not last for any length of time. We always get the same results and we know what they are. Mr. Speaker, if we must admit that bingos, because of our present system, may temporarily help charitable organizations, we do not believe that the federal government is a charitable organization. We do not believe that the federal government should organize a national lottery in Canada.

We do not believe that the provincial government should establish a provincial one, nor the municipal governments any local ones. But, with regard to charitable organizations, because of the present situation, they have no other ways of raising money, except lotteries or bingos.

So we shall support the amendment moved by the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles), but we remain convinced that this is not a solution to the problems which affect the whole nation.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a long time since that lotteries project was first suggested to the government. The government is strongly urged to set up a lottery or to amend the Criminal Code and I say again that this would not settle the matter.

However, in view of the financial system we live in, charitable organizations and social clubs are compelled to resort to bingos. Let us enable them to do so without breaking the law as has been the case since bingos are conducted throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to support the amendment of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre, but we still maintain that setting up a lottery will not settle anything. This is quite clear in our mind.

This amendment suits us in the circumstances. It will enable charitable organizations to paddle and dabble in a system which the Minister of Justice wishes to maintain at all costs in Canada.

[English]

Hon. John N. Turner (Minister of Justice): I should like to clarify very briefly the purpose [Mr. Caouette.]

of these two subsections to which the amendment of the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre (Mr. Knowles) applies.

The new section 179A to be found in clause 13 of the bill provides, as the hon. member suggested, that lotteries shall henceforth be lifted from the Criminal Code and placed within provincial option under a licence of the provincial attorneys-general if their purpose is charitable or religious or if they are run by charitable or religious organizations. That is to be found in paragraph (c) of the first subsection of section 179A. At the same time, a similar local option is given to a provincial attorney general or to a Lieutenant Governor in Council in respect of agricultural fairs or exhibitions or to operators of a concession leased by an agricultural board or an exhibition board to conduct and manage a lottery scheme in the province.

It seemed logical to the government that if the criminal law were to be withdrawn from lotteries managed by private organizations, charitable and religious, or by agricultural fairs, an option should also lie with the provincial government itself or with an agent of a provincial government, and, since this was being done, that the criminal law should be totally withdrawn in its application to the federal government in this area as well.

I wish to deny categorically any suggestion that clause 13, particularly the provisions to which the hon. member's amendment relates, in any way sets up a provincial lottery scheme or a federal lottery scheme. It in no way does this. It merely takes both areas out of the ambit of the criminal law—and I think the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre will agree with the substance of what I am saying.

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): It will just make it possible.

Mr. Turner (Ottawa-Carleton): That is right. It just makes it possible. It withdraws the application of the criminal law and makes this a question of civil, public policy. It does not establish a new tax because no new lottery scheme is set up. As the hon. member for Winnipeg North Centre suggested correctly, it is, if one wishes to call it so, permissive legislation. It does establish a local option and it now becomes a question of public policy at the federal and provincial levels whether lottery schemes ought to be established. It is not a stamp of approval. Since the hon. gentleman referred to my colleague the Minister of