

Criminal Code

• (1610)

For those who look at racing from the point of view of gambling dollars, there is more competition with the increase in casinos and bingos across the country. The money being spent at those options are increasing in most of the provinces. Thus, pari-mutuel betting is up against that type of direct competition. That competition probably draws a slightly different kind of crowd in that most people who have been involved in race track pari-mutuel betting like to see the horses and like to see the race. They like to be there or at least close enough to see it on a big screen. It is a little different from watching cards. Some people have to see the horse, which is the main kick.

This is permissive legislation which requires the acceptance of each of the provinces and their respective racing commissions. We are hopeful that the legislation will recognize that to the point that each province will be cognizant of it and form their own policy groups, probably made up of their own racing commissions, representatives of Agriculture Canada, the race tracks or the race track owners in the particular province and the provincial horsemen's associations which are racing at those tracks. It would be much simpler all round if these four groups were involved right from the beginning in setting the policy for each province. However, I am not sure that this point has to be stated in the legislation. We understand that some of the groups may want to put that point forward as the legislation goes to committee.

There have been a few concerns expressed in this regard. However, the reception from the horse racing community has been positive. Those involved in it have been under considerable pressure in some parts of the country as a result of the general economic downturn. Some of them have felt the pressure from Revenue Canada with changes in the interpretation of who is a farmer and who is not. That is something important to the over-all health of the racing industry since the smaller race horse operators are very much a necessity in terms of keeping the industry alive. They have to be able to increase and improve the breed. They also have an important role to play. It is not a question of the top breeders who have to be maintained. We also have to maintain the balance of the system. It has to be kept in relative good health, otherwise moderate to good horses have no other place to go.

Without the small operators and the small tracks the industry could not survive. It is a question of general genetics and so on that only a few of the top horses ever actually make it into the top sales and record books. For that reason we are supportive of this initiative. We will be supportive of it as it leaves the House in the form of legislation. We hope the initiative will strengthen the industry both by lengthening the season through the use of telephone and television and that it is successful in its attempt to increase revenues at the farm level where the horse owners need it.

Hon. Ralph Ferguson (Lambton—Middlesex): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to be able to take part in this debate today. I want to say that I am further pleased that there has been all-Party agreement that the Bill should go to the Agriculture Committee of the House of Commons as soon as possible.

First, I want to say that the Canadian horse industry and the racing industry is perhaps one of the best regulated industries of any country in the world. It has gained reputation for its excellence, not only for the horses but for the horsemen we have in Canada. Horse racing has always been referred to as the sport of kings. It is also the poor man's sport. I well recall the first year I went to high school. I rode a horse in those early years, a horse that was not broken until it was seven years old. We had a lot of exciting times en route.

I am also extremely interested in the Bill since over the last week or two I have discussed it with some of my neighbours, some of whom are involved in the industry, people such as Bernie Geerts, the Warners, Dr. Chris Deuzeman, Cecil Maddock and, last but not least, the Campbell family. I refer here to Ray Campbell and his son Rob, but more particularly to Duncan Campbell of Ailsa Craig who was inducted into the Canadian Horseman's Hall of Fame on January 21, 1983. Duncan Campbell is 89 years old and still owns a race horse.

This remarkable family, headed by Duncan, along with his two sons Ray and Jack, still race and train race horses. Grandson Jim is an excellent trainer and grandsons Rob and John are drivers. John Campbell of Ailsa Craig is one of the leading drivers in North America to date this year. He was the leading driver in North America for the last three out of four years. I am proud to reflect on the exploits and the tradition of excellence displayed by the Campbell family.