

*Greyhound Races*

If I may, I should like to set the issue in its proper context. As a sport, horse racing has been the biggest attraction in Canada for more than a quarter of a century. It has been estimated that, in 1983, 13 million people went to the races, and many more millions of Canadians attended horse shows, rodeos and other such events. Toronto's Royal Winter Fair is the world's largest indoor agricultural exhibition. Its horse show attracts more competitors than the National Horse Show of New York and more prizes are handed out.

Horse shows are still an integral part of all sorts of fairs, whether they are small community fairs or major exhibitions, and many young people are handling animals for the first time when they come to show a pony or a horse. In fact, horse and pony 4-H Clubs are growing in popularity. Many people seem to think that only the wealthy can own horses. However, this is not true. Farm people have always been as interested in horses as the aristocrats. In years past, farmers used to have at least one work horse or one riding horse on their farms and many of them still do.

Races were often arranged on the spot during small fairs. Local people raced the horses that they were using every day. Nowadays, many city people own horses. Even if they see them as show animals or as pets rather than as work horses, they board them with farmers, and then those horses owned by city people are an integral part of Canadian farm life.

There are well over 750,000 horses in Canada today. Horse raising is an important industry. It is estimated that Canadians have over \$2.5 billion invested in horses, \$2.5 billion invested in land, buildings and equipment used for their upkeep.

Canadians also spend about \$2 billion a year for feed, transportation and other services needed by horses owners. As already mentioned, horse racing accounts for about 40,000 jobs. This industry represents \$1.6 million in bets every year in Canada.

The sector is now faced with major financial problems. According to the latest figures, the daily betting average is decreasing on many race tracks. To this date, compared with the same period in 1983, betting has decreased by 17 per cent in Barrie, 3 per cent in Dundas, 8 per cent in London, 8 per cent in Windsor, 3 per cent in Winnipeg, 20 per cent in Orangeville, 5 per cent in Saint John and 3 per cent at the Blue Bonnets track in Montreal.

If we add the rate of inflation to these percentages, we can understand why race tracks are really having problems.

I mentioned the Blue Bonnets race track because Montreal used to have another major race track some years ago, namely the Richelieu Park which no longer exists. Last year, Blue Bonnets recorded a 4 per cent decrease in betting after registering a 14 per cent decrease in 1982. Under these conditions, how long can this race track continue to operate?

The basic problem is that the industry is saturated. If we now allowed the practice of pari mutuel in dog racing, we

would be signing the death warrant of many local race tracks and eliminating the livelihood of a whole network of people who are now earning a living in the horse racing industry.

Still, this can be prevented simply by rejecting this Bill, or at least by waiting for economic conditions to improve before approving it.

Until now, we have focussed on the economic aspects of the Bill, but other elements must be taken into consideration. For instance, we have to remember that, in Florida, most greyhounds are trained with live rabbits. They set the dogs loose to chase rabbits in the fields, or they tie up the rabbits and use them as baits to make the dogs run. Animal lovers both in Canada and the United States have already indicated their opposition to this practice. I should mention however that racing rabbits are in fact mechanical devices.

Although racing dogs are fairly well treated, many people object to their running in races. The reason is that dog racing is not part of our traditions. In Florida, certainly, but not here. And many of us object to dogs chasing a mechanical rabbit. We feel that dogs should have better to do than that. I fear even that if we allow dog racing to develop in Canada, our own and our children's perception of dogs would change for the worse.

There are countries where bullfighting is a well attended and respectable sport. There are countries where cockfighting is also popular. For a great many people, a trip to Florida would not be complete without a visit to the cynodrom.

Once again, that is a sport which is foreign to our traditions and is not very popular here. Of course, the public outlook may change. Our attitude may evolve in such a way that it will be possible to introduce betting on dogs, but for the time being, as our horse racing industry is facing a questionable future, I urge the House to defeat this bill.

[English]

**Mr. Gordon Taylor (Bow River):** Mr. Speaker, practically all of the discussion this afternoon dealt with racing. More than that is involved in this Bill. The Bill provides for horse racing, greyhound racing, fight, game or sport. We are opening the door to people with dogs to begin having dogfights. Dogfights can make a lot of money, but where do they lead?

When I was a boy, I had a dog called Jumbo. He was the best fighter in the whole Drumheller Valley. One coal miner, every time he got tight and wanted to make some money, borrowed Jumbo. Jumbo could beat any dog in the country. He made a lot of money on it. However, poor Jumbo came home, and my brothers and I were the ones who had to look after Jumbo's torn ears and bleeding mouth and legs.

• (1800)

I do not go in for dog fighting at all. I do not think it is very good. Since this Bill will provide for dog fights, I think we should throw it out.