

Criminal Code

his presentation on behalf of the industry was very worthwhile. I have rarely heard anyone speak as fondly of a sport as did the hon. member for North Vancouver-Burnaby both this morning and again this afternoon. As I listened to him speak I came to the conclusion that perhaps he thought the bill was brought into the House for the purpose of banning horse racing. He pleaded eloquently for its continuation. Although I have no particular interest in horse racing at all other than from a purely spectator point of view, I do, however, what to make a few comments on it.

What we are talking about really is extending the opportunity for people to bet without going to the track. We are calling it by the interesting phrase "inter-track betting". It is, in fact, off-track betting. It is off-track betting because it will be possible for a person to go to a track where there is absolutely no horse racing taking place, go to a wicket and place a bet without ever being involved in either seeing or enjoying the event. In fact, it will even be possible—if I understand it correctly, and I will eagerly await the minister's correction if I am not reading the bill accurately—for an individual to place his or her bet by telephone. In all fairness, I must say that is off-track betting. That is not inter-track betting. Inter-track betting is where you go to a track to watch the races and while you are at the pari-mutuel window, as a result of knowledge you have about a race going on at another track, you want to place an additional bet on a horse or on a number of horses that are running at the same time at another place.

I want to suggest to the minister that it is entirely possible, if you read this legislation and think about it, that rather than being beneficial in terms of encouraging the maintenance of racing at those tracks which are currently undergoing financial difficulty, this bill may well discourage people who otherwise may have gone to the likes of Fort Erie from Toronto. These people would have paid admission, purchased their lunch, would have paid to park their vehicle and would have contributed to the general maintenance of that track other than in a betting sense. It is now possible under this legislation for the tracks to run and to operate without anyone ever going to see the races.

I say to the hon. member for North Vancouver-Burnaby that that surely flies in the face of everything he has been speaking about. That surely is not encouraging the sport to flourish. That is not encouraging horse racing as a spectator sport. What we are doing today, and let us make no mistake about it, is facilitating the desire of those who bet on horse racing to bet in any way they want without having to go to the track. I must confess that does not appeal to me. I do not happen to think that we should be seeking new ways to encourage people to bet money. I do not think that is a particularly useful exercise.

Mr. Lapierre: That is not your business.

Mr. Deans: It is my business. If it were not my business, this bill would not be before the House of Commons. I suggest to the hon. member that his interjection is both inappropriate and

inaccurate. If it were not my business, the bill would not be here. Therefore, it is my business.

I think this legislation will ultimately have the opposite effect which the hon. member for North Vancouver-Burnaby in all good faith indicated was his desire and his hope. I think it will undermine the sport. I do not think it will undermine the betting angle. In fact, I think it may well encourage more people to risk their pay cheques, like the lady about whom he spoke. It may well encourage people to risk their pay cheques because they no longer have to find the wherewithal to get to the track.

The next step to this is clear. The Jockey Club in Ontario, if you want to speak of Ontario, will say that not only is it inconvenient for people to have to go all the way to the track where the race is being run, but it is a bit inconvenient for them to have to go to the track in their own municipality. We do not have racetracks in every municipality. In order to encourage people to take part in this sport of horse racing, maybe it, the Jockey Club, should be given the opportunity to open an adjunct to the track—maybe one in every small town which will be called part of the track—to be run by the Jockey Club. That would enable everyone to have access to this marvellous sport. But what it will also do is enable everyone to have access to the betting operation which has nothing at all to do with the sport itself.

I have serious reservations about this legislation. The hon. member for North Vancouver-Burnaby, in setting out the financial condition that is being enjoyed by the majority of the horse racing fraternity, indicated quite clearly that there are now, and have been for years, substantial sums of money going into horse racing. He pointed out that more people attend horse races than attend any other sport. On balance, the sport is in reasonably good shape. I am not suggesting that it might not have the urge or the need to improve its financial position, but at the moment it is certainly in reasonably good shape.

The hon. member pointed out that last year in Canada \$1.7 billion was placed on bets. With some pride, and I can say with some justifiable pride, the hon. member, who has spent his entire life at the racetrack or thereabouts, told us that about 14 million people have attended horse races. He is in this House a great deal and I do not know how he gets to the racetrack all the time. Be that as it may, the industry seems to be flourishing quite nicely. Therefore, why do we want to discourage those people from going to the horse races? Why do we want to make it unnecessary for them to go? Why do we want to open this up so that whatever number of people who would go to the racetrack, only half of them will now go? Instead of going to the track they will simply nip down to the corner and place their wager. Why would we want to do that? It seems to me that this bill is undermining the very soul of the industry that it is intended to support.

Mr. Lapierre: It's energy saving.

Mr. Deans: My colleague who does marvellous research on things such as this has brought to my attention a letter sent by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Whelan). It concerns inter-