

Hospital Sweepstakes

ceivable form of sport, none the less the British parliament has not legalized sweepstakes. And while it is true that the parliament of the south of Ireland has done so, I do not know that that would be any argument to me for considering it particularly good. I have no great admiration for the wisdom of the parliament of the southern part of my native island.

If the argument of my hon. friend is true, why not go the whole way? Why not completely abolish every restriction on gambling? If my hon. friend is right in his argument that what we want is to have the gaiety of nations increased by the passage of such a bill and by the removal of the restrictions on gambling, why not go the whole way; why not lift the cloud of depression and put this country on its feet again by encouraging everyone to gamble on every possible pretext and occasion and on every possible form of chance? That is the logic of it. If gambling is good to any extent why not use it to the limit? But the bill does not propose that. The bill proposes to take a practice which has been declared illegal, which stands now as an illegality in our criminal code, and, because the object is worthy, to clothe it in a garment of white and send it out as a good and pure thing. If it is bad, how can it be argued that the fact that the money it produces is to be used for hospitals makes it good? If it is good, why is it in our criminal code? Why not sweep away all the restrictions and withdraw the prohibitions that now make gambling illegal?

I have no intention of labouring this matter any further because I imagine there are other hon. members who desire to speak on it. For the reasons I have given in a rather rapid and sketchy form, I am opposed to the passage of this bill.

Mr. A. M. CARMICHAEL (Kindersley): Mr. Speaker, I do not think the house need make any mistake as to the purpose of this bill—it is to legalize gambling in the various provinces at the option of the attorney general of each province. As the previous speaker (Mr. Bury) has pointed out, this bill puts within the hands of one individual in each province the decision as to whether or not sweepstakes shall be permitted in that particular province. In other words, this great moral question of gambling is to be decided by one individual in each province. That is entirely unfair. There might be an attorney general who looked upon gambling as a moral question which should be decided upon its merits. He might not feel like opening the door to gambling. On the other hand, there

[Mr. Bury.]

might be an attorney general who took the contrary view. There is being placed within the ambit of one man's judgment the decision whether or not the doors shall be opened to gambling within a particular province. I have been informed that the real purpose of this bill is to raise money for the hospitals in the Pacific province which have got into rather bad financial condition.

The last speaker referred to the hospital sweepstakes act passed by the Irish Free State. This act, known as the Public Charitable Hospitals Act, was passed on June 4, 1930. I think it should be drawn to the attention of the house that there is a time limit placed upon the operations of this act. The act specifies that it shall become inoperative after July 1, 1934. Its operations are confined to the period between June 4, 1930, and July 1, 1934. I should like to give the house some information as to how this act has worked out in practice. After all, the official test of any legislation is the results obtained. The Irish sweepstakes bill was in operation for five sweeps prior to the one of 1932. The total amount of money involved in those five sweeps was £13,800,000. The sellers' commissions amounted to £2,300,000; other expenses amounted to £1,041,000, while the prizes totalled £7,675,000. The total of the prizes, expenses and commissions was £11,016,000. Deducting that from the total amount collected we find that there was left for the hospitals £2,784,000. Bringing these amounts down to percentages, we find that the hospitals received just twenty per cent of the money collected. There are a number of business men in this house and I do not think it would be hard to convince them that it is not good business where it costs 80 cents to collect 20 cents. If the Minister of Finance brought forward some proposal to raise money by way of taxation at a cost of 80 per cent, I do not think we would take very long to defeat it. I recall a few years ago that we were told it cost 2 per cent to collect over \$100,000,000 in income taxes. We considered that that was very good business.

Last year a royal commission was appointed by the British government to investigate sweepstakes and decide whether or not it would be profitable for the British government to undertake the operation of sweepstakes similar to those operated in the Irish Free State. This commission was under the chairmanship of the Right Hon. Sir Sydney Rowlatt, and representatives of various interested organizations gave evidence. I think it would be interesting to those of us who