

Greyhound Races

If this is such a harmless, innocent pastime, the greyhound racing about which we are talking today, where people spend an evening watching dogs racing, that is one thing. However, if it becomes the threshold or the door for introducing gambling, which then becomes the threshold or the door for the gangster mob, that is another level of crime for our country.

The innocuous way in which the legislation comes to us looks innocent enough, but the multiplier effect of the harm it does to our country and its citizens, we really do not know. Once people become infected, we really do not know what will be the end result.

As I said at the outset, I am glad there is no swelling tide of enthusiasm for this particular Bill. Obviously Hon. Members are committed to making certain that it does not pass. I suppose the Hon. Member for Chambly feels that he has done his duty to whoever approached him to present this legislation as he has already left the House and knows that it will not pass. The very fact that we entertain this kind of legislation is a sign of the time that we look for easy solutions to our economic needs. Instead of being creative and working, we want fancy, new and immediate solutions to our money problems. It does not work. Even if we win, we tend to lose. If we follow the record of those who won grand prizes, we tend to lose even if we win, and therefore I am glad this legislation will not pass.

Mr. Dave Nickerson (Western Arctic): Mr. Speaker, this afternoon I will go against what is apparently the grain and support this Bill. I think it is a great Bill. I congratulate the Hon. Member for Chambly (Mr. Dupont) for bringing it to the attention of the House of Commons.

I am particularly disappointed in the attitude of mind which has been displayed by certain members of the horse-racing fraternity here this afternoon. It would appear to me that they are trying to protect their area of privilege. They do not want any competition. I wish we could bring suit against them under the Combines Investigation Act because these are the types of practices in which they are engaging. They are going around telling everyone what a great thing horse racing is, how it contributes to the national wellbeing and how many jobs it creates. However, they do not want anyone else to start up in a related business or to give opportunity to people who might be unable to go to a horse race track to engage in the same type of activity.

My personal opinion, having been to dog tracks in Europe and in the United States, is that dog racing does not necessarily detract from horse racing. I feel their arguments are invalid on that score. It seems to me that in states like Arizona dog racing and horse racing exist side by side. They are not a threat one to the other. In fact, if anything were to be the case, people very often start off being active in the sport of greyhound racing and graduate to horse racing. I do not buy the arguments of the horsy set at all.

I would like to refer to the moral argument which has been argued very capably by the Hon. Member for Surrey-White Rock-North Delta (Mr. Friesen). I do not want to get into the

moral argument of whether we should be for or against gambling this afternoon. However, I would point out that if gambling on greyhound races is immoral, then gambling on horse racing is equally immoral. If we buy that argument—and I personally do not—and think that gambling on animal racing is immoral, the course of action we should therefore take as a consequence would be to ban horse racing.

I would not want to see that happen, we cannot use the moral argument to say that we should not engage in greyhound racing when we have horse racing all over the country. It would appear that horse racing is very much the sport of the rich man or the rich woman. Of course, it is known as the sport of kings and that if one is to engage in it, one certainly requires a kingly income. It costs a lot of money if one is to be the owner of racehorses. However, if one is interested in that type of activity and does not have a kingly income, then of course, were dog racing to be allowed, one could get into it much more easily and cheaply. I have known quite a few greyhound owners. Very often the greyhound in question is the household pet. It costs very little to maintain greyhounds. You can do it with only a few dollars a week. If you are prepared to engage in the training yourself, you can have an awful lot of fun with the animals.

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If you want to get into the business of operating a track, if it is a horse racing track it will require an investment of hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars. These facilities can only be built in major population centres. Dog tracks, on the other hand, can be established for only a few thousand dollars. They can be built in localities where there is no way you could operate a horse racing track. In the Northwest Territories, for example, it would be crazy to have a horse racing track. However, I am sure that certain towns there could have a greyhound track operating for part of the year. It would not cost that much and could probably operate quite successfully.

I do not like the idea put forward this afternoon by people who believe solely in horse racing. They are trying to keep to themselves a good thing that they have going, not wanting to let the guy who is not as wealthy have access to the same type of enjoyment.

My final argument this afternoon in support of the exciting sport of greyhound racing is that it is a lot of fun. It is not only fun for the spectators and fun for the owners of the greyhounds, most of all, it is fun for the dogs which go around the track and chase the hare.

[Translation]

Mr. André Bachand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add a few words to everything that has been said in the House concerning this Bill. Horse racing in Canada is a very large and important operation which is now much too vulnerable from an economic standpoint for the House to authorize pari-mutuel betting on dog races.