

*Criminal Code***CRIMINAL CODE**

MEASURE TO AMEND

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Whelan (for Mr. Chrétien) that Bill C-117, to amend the Criminal Code, be read the second time and, by unanimous consent, referred to Committee of the Whole.

• (1410)

Mr. Chuck Cook (North Vancouver-Burnaby): Mr. Speaker, in checking the blues I see there is one thing I forgot to include in the statistics, particularly when I was comparing lotteries with racetracks. That is that the average lottery returns approximately 45 cents on the dollar to those who buy lottery tickets. I do not believe there is a racetrack in Canada where it is not over 80 cents on the dollar. I want that on the record to indicate my total displeasure with the proliferation of lotteries which seems to be taking place to the detriment of my favourite sport.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, that I thought a long time about whether or not I would discuss the matters I am going to discuss now. I came to the conclusion that it was probably better if I did as someone who has enjoyed racing most of his life. That, Mr. Speaker, is the other side of racing. I personally believe I have seen the odd housewife who has lost the week's grocery money at a racetrack and is going home to face an irate husband.

A personal story: a number of years ago an older man who knew that I knew something about racing came to see me and informed me that he had inherited \$8,000, which was his total savings at the time, and that in the course of a three-month period he had managed to lose all but \$50 through ever-increasing bets and in ever-increasing desperation. He wanted me to do two things. One, tell the racetrack in hopes that they might return his money. Of course, I had to explain very carefully that a racetrack only provides the means to bet and it was something that could not be done. Second, he wanted me, of all things, to give him the name of the winning horse in a race so that he could bet his last \$50 and start on the road to recovery. Well, Mr. Speaker, I have found over a lifetime that the minute I tout someone on a horse, that is the kiss of death! Believe me, if Seattle Slew were running a race against a billy goat and I told someone to bet on the horse, I am convinced that somehow or other the billy goat would win the race! So I did not do that either.

The question that bothered me, Mr. Speaker, and one I have thought a great deal about over the years, is what responsibility does the racing industry have to those who cannot look after themselves. Really, I do not believe there is an answer. Do you stop gambling on horses because of the very few that get themselves in trouble? Of course, there are many rationalizations such as, if it were not that, it would be something else, and I suspect that is true. No racetrack wants or encourages people to risk more than they can afford. The track does not have the climate of a Nevada casino. It is a place where people go to have a thoroughly good time and not lose too much. If people lost more than they could afford, the game would soon

stop because it was destroying people. But there is the odd person this does happen to and I hope I do not do a disservice, whether to myself, the industry or this House, by suggesting that on the same basis, because automobile accidents kill people, we should do away with the automobile. I finally came to the rationalization that the joy this sport has for literally millions of people, the enjoyment people in and out of the industry get from it, far outweighs the odd person—and it does not happen that often—who cannot control themselves and are hurt severely by the fact that they get carried away at a race track.

I wanted to mention that because I know there are many religious people in Canada who feel it is sinful to gamble. I suggest to them it is sinful to buy a lottery ticket or play bingo in church basements, that those are sins of equal magnitude, in the moral sense, to that of placing a wager at a racetrack. It is very simple for anyone to buy a racing form which contains more information about horses than perhaps any other publication in the world. It makes *The Sporting Life* published in England look like a rank amateur in terms of information on horse flesh. If a person does that, then it is an intellectual game of matching their wits, intelligence and ability in comparing horses with everyone else at the racetrack. As Will Rogers said, what makes a horserace is a difference of opinion, and that you find in substantial amounts at any race meeting.

The moral issue involved in racing is something which has been with us from the beginning and always will be with us. When you look at the history of racing, going back 3,500 years, it is obvious that it is an old and honoured entertainment medium—sport if you will, but entertainment as well. Certainly an afternoon in the sun watching horses run is far superior, to my mind at least, to sitting in a dark theatre watching flickering shadows on a screen.

I wanted to speak on the moral aspects of this issue for the simple reason that I would sincerely hope we never reach a time where we deny pleasure to so many because the odd person will hurt himself or herself. Note that the hurt is self-inflicted and they are not encouraged to continue. In fact, anyone in the industry would say: "Come and have a good time but do not bet too much." But of course, someone does periodically. To those people we offer our sympathy and understanding, but at the same time they did it to themselves and hopefully most of them realize it.

I am pleased with this legislation, I certainly intend to vote for it, and I think having covered that one small point I will conclude my remarks.

• (1420)

Mr. Ian Deans (Hamilton Mountain): Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to speak at any great length on this bill, but I must confess that when I do arrive at my conclusion it will not be quite the same as the one arrived at by the hon. member for North Vancouver-Burnaby (Mr. Cook).

At the beginning I do want to say that what the hon. member said was both entertaining and informative. I thought that