

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

AMENDMENT TO PROVIDE FOR THE USE OF HUMANE TRAPS FOR ANIMALS

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Item No. 1, in the name of the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin)?

Some hon. Members: Stand.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Stand at the request of the government. Item No. 3, in the name of the hon. member for Capilano (Mr. Huntington)?

Some hon. Members: Stand.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Stand at the request of the government. Item No. 7, in the name of the hon. member for Scarborough West (Mr. Martin).

Some hon. Members: Stand.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Stand at the request of the government.

Mr. Donald W. Munro (Esquimalt-Saanich) moved that Bill C-208, to amend the Criminal Code (humane traps) be read the second time and referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Legal Affairs.

● (1700)

He said: Mr. Speaker, in rising at second reading of this bill I want to make it clear that I have no intention of speaking at great length, and I also want to express my appreciation to those hon. members from all sides of the House who have indicated their support for this bill.

There is support for this bill from hon. members on both sides of the House and among citizens of the country, and from associations such as the Association for the Protection of Furbearing Animals. I have also received petitions from a number of parts of the country. For example, I have a petition from Nepean High School here in Ottawa signed by a number of students. There is also a petition from Kingston, Ontario, signed by 1,586 members of the Humane Society of Kingston.

My desire to be brief is motivated by the hope that others will also speak briefly in support of this measure and that before six o'clock we can vote to have it referred to a committee, or at least to have its subject matter referred to a committee.

This bill is designed to meet a variety of Canadian demands. There is a general demand for a device which will trap animals in a manner which does not cause them agony and suffering nor cause them to die of starvation, bloodletting, or as victims of predators. Second, the demand is for a device which will enable those whose livelihood depends on furs to continue their trade in the knowledge that they have not been the cause of

Humane Animal Traps

agony and suffering nor of condemning living creatures to die of starvation, suffering, or as victims of predators.

I want to make it very clear at the outset that it is not my intention to destroy the trapping industry or to interfere with it in any way. I know Canadian history and the role trapping has played therein. We need to apply modern technology to this long standing Canadian enterprise.

There is a third demand which I am hoping to meet, and that is the demand of Canadian trappers for a device which will give them a good pelt and not a damaged one.

Of the traps in use today, the most common are the leg-hold and the wire snare. These do not serve the purposes nor meet the demands I have already recorded. Both these devices produce results such as those this bill is trying to avoid: agony, suffering, starvation, victimization and, frequently, damaged pelts.

How, then, do I propose to meet these demands and replace these vicious instruments with better ones? The bill seeks to encourage the development of alternative trapping devices. The simple purport of this bill is to develop alternative trapping devices which can be rated by the Minister of State (Fisheries) and the Environment (Mr. LeBlanc) as preferable to the ones now in use. Once these alternative devices are available—and it may be a different device for each size or kind of animal—the existing devices will be banned, whether they be leg-hold traps, snares, or any other type of trap which inflicts cruel and unusual punishment on furbearing animals. By banning, this bill stipulates that the very setting of such a device causing unnecessary cruelty, when a better device is available, is a criminal offence and punishable accordingly. It also stipulates that the manufacture, import or sale of the less desirable device is likewise a criminal offence and therefore also punishable accordingly.

One is bound to ask how such devices are to be developed and brought to the attention, first, of the ministry for testing and approval, and subsequently, to the attention of the trade and the industry?

In September, 1973, a federal-provincial committee on humane trapping was established to test and develop better trapping devices. This committee was set up and funded by the ten provinces, the federal government and the two territories. It has had at its disposal something like \$75,000 per year for a five year program, but only 30 per cent of that allocation goes toward trap development. Most of the remainder, unfortunately, goes toward administrative costs. It does seem to be underfunded. In the first two years of its existence no funds whatever were allocated for trap testing. To the best of my knowledge some 100 traps have been submitted to the committee, but less than ten devices in the short time following those two years have been found worthy of further tests. Therefore halfway through its term the committee offers very little hope of real achievement, judging by its performance so far.

We are bound to ask ourselves whether the committee is under-funded or whether it is well administered. We do not