

Greyhound Races

I realize the Hon. Member for Chambly (Mr. Dupont) who introduced the motion is thinking of an industry where the type of dog used is very graceful and is lovely to watch. But basically this would not be, certainly for a long time, an industry that would be indigenous to this country. We do not have very large stocks of greyhounds bred and raised in this country. It is not a dog that is common to Canada. In order to move into this field in a large way—which I think is what the Hon. Member would expect to happen—we would have to import stock. Again, we would be importing stock at the expense of an industry which is indigenous and which has a large capacity for breeding fine animals for racing of one kind or another, whether that be horse racing, trotting or whatever other form that may take. At this point it would be a mistake to pass a Bill which would tend to raise the level of betting. The promotion that would go along with it would do that. The saturation point has arrived. I believe many Canadians are wondering whether gambling is becoming too important and whether some families are not suffering from the excesses in this activity. At the same time greyhound racing would undermine a well-established, long-term, developed industry which is not at its peak and which is not in a very healthy situation at this point.

I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that we do not pass the Bill at this time.

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock-North Delta): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to speak on Bill C-10 introduced by the Hon. Member for Chambly (Mr. Dupont). I note he has already left the House.

An Hon. Member: He has gone to the dog races.

Mr. Nickerson: He has gone to the dogs, like the Liberals.

Mr. Friesen: I guess he is not too encouraged at the prospects of this Bill passing today. I am glad to note there is not any great wave of enthusiasm for the legislation.

When I see legislation like this, one of the first questions that comes to my mind is, what is the motive behind it? Is it a Bill that is being sponsored by dog lovers of Canada? Is it because of this incredible love for dogs that we have legislation like this? I can hardly imagine that the most avid dog lovers across Canada would be euphoric about this piece of legislation. It cannot be because dog lovers want this Bill. Is it because people interested in dog racing are trying to help the employment picture? We have heard figures mentioned today of the number of people who would be employed if we introduced dog racing into Canada. I cannot be that optimistic that the people interested in introducing dog racing are really thinking of the unemployed when they talk about this new industry for out country. We have to get to the bottom of it. We are really not talking here about dog racing and the prospect of providing another form of wholesome entertainment for Canadians. What we are really talking about is broadening another industry, namely the gambling industry. That is what is at the heart of it.

Some time ago a fellow told me that a gentleman in Canada has the franchise for jai alai. I said to myself, why would anyone be interested in a franchise to introduce jai alai into Canada. Is it because Canadians would flock to arenas to watch jai alai? Again, the answer is no. It is because it opens up another avenue for gambling? This is the point on which I disagree with my colleague from Selkirk-Interlake and my colleague from Ontario who spoke previously. Both gentlemen mentioned that gambling, lotteries or other forms of gambling have reached the saturation point. I do not think that is ever the case. I do not think those people who have a proclivity to gambling ever reach a saturation point or that the market ever reaches a saturation point. There is always another way to diversify investment in gambling. If caught by the gambling fever, one never restricts oneself to only one form of gambling. If it is cards or any other kind of gambling, one looks for another avenue, because that is what the game of chance is all about. If one only plays cards or the horses, one has restricted oneself to a single form of chance. People tied to the whole business of getting rich by chance always look for another chance, so the industry never reaches a saturation point. All we have to do is to go to Third World countries to see the multiplicity of gambling opportunities and to realize that there is never an end to the opportunities for gambling.

● (1740)

What I see so wrong about gambling, particularly when the Government is involved as it is in the lottery business, is that for it to be successful it has to create as many losers as possible. Most people have to lose in the gambling operation. That is true whether it is horse racing, dog racing or the lotteries. The Government is supposed to be supporting people, making them winners and making them feel successful, and it is getting them to lose money. We have had the Super Loto, the \$14 million one and the Great Grand Chance where there were close to 70 million buyers of tickets. Most of those people lost; all but one lost. I cannot understand why a Government, which is supposed to have a wholesome outlook toward its citizens, would want to make people lose as much as possible and still promote the idea of winning. There is something immoral about that. It is robbery of a kind.

Finally, I want to say that gambling never restricts itself to the gambling industry. My friend from Scarborough mentioned that the race-tracks in New Jersey were in very difficult economic condition and faced ultimate shutdown. I said to myself, "Why are the race-tracks in New Jersey in that tough shape? Could it be that Atlantic City has opened up and people have unlimited opportunity for gambling there, which is siphoning off the business from race-tracks in New Jersey?" Mr. Speaker, you know as well as I that the people in Atlantic City who are gambling are not there with a pure sense of purpose, necessarily, that it is not simply a nice, clean, economic investment. It never fails where gambling becomes an industry—and I emphasize that—that the mob is somewhere involved sooner or later and sooner or later there has to be police control.