

Criminal Code

The federal Government will set out the home market area in which teletheatres can operate. Beyond that, the provincial regulatory body will have some jurisdiction, but not with regard to setting the home market area. Regulations will be enforced by the provincial Government. However, it will not make those regulations and it will not necessarily have input into them, although it probably will have some input since it controls the agencies and the regulatory body. Provincial agencies have expressed the concern that there will be no provision for a competitive process for the operation of the teletheatres.

Those are the concerns expressed by some provincial Governments. I hope we will have an opportunity to hear them at close range when the Bill is considered by the Standing Committee or the legislative committee, whichever it goes to.

In the second part of the proposed Bill it authorizes the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Mazankowski) to make regulations which will define teletheatre betting, teletheatre licensing, and the theatre market area. The regulations will allow for ownership or leasing of theatre facilities by a racing association. Under the regulation there will be provision to prevent a teletheatre from becoming a betting shop, and certain criteria and standards must be met. That is very important, otherwise it could deteriorate solely into a betting theatre.

In some states in the United States it is like cable television. The teletheatres can become as important as the race track. It is very important that there be co-operation between the two levels of Government to ensure that the teletheatre is not wagging the race tracks, and that there is good co-operation between the two levels of Government in that regard. The regulations also provide that there be an agreement between the horsemen and the track whenever a teletheatre operation is established.

Those are some of the regulations that I am told will be brought into play when the legislation is adopted by the Government and the Department is able to put in place those regulations. Those are the main points that I wished to raise. There is concern from the provincial regulatory agencies that they be addressed in the committee hearings. They have the over-all responsibility for enforcing the operation of the race tracks in their provinces.

• (1550)

This legislation can be beneficial to the racing industry to extend its approach across the country in an expanded market area, providing entertainment and ensuring that horse racing continues, not only so that jobs are provided but that entertainment is provided. We have to assume that betting will take place, whether it is buying a Wintario ticket or by going to the Saturday night bingo. It is important that if we are to have betting that it should be on a controlled basis where there is some benefit to Government. In fact, most benefits in horse racing go back to the patrons and the tracks. Provincial Governments do very well out of the whole arrangement. My understanding is that the federal Government barely breaks even. Its operation is to ensure the reliability and the policing of pari-mutuel betting. Most of the tax benefits go to the provincial Governments. In any event, it is a vital industry. There are 100,000 jobs in the horse racing industry which encompass farming operations, breeding operations and the livestock industry which supports and encourages it. If you compare the horse racing industry with a number of other major industries in Canada, a very large number of people are involved.

I hope we can devise a Bill that will protect the rights of society and that we do not descend to a situation of uncontrolled gambling shops but provide a high-quality pari-mutuel teletheatre arrangement which will be beneficial to the industry without any adverse effect on the community at large.

We want to see this legislation go to committee where it can be given more detailed study. From the briefing that a couple of us in our caucus had, it is obviously quite a complicated industry even though the amendments before us today are quite simple in themselves. We want to see this Bill move on to committee stage.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I appreciate the Hon. Member's comments and his obvious support for the Bill. In light of the support and the fact that this measure has been around since 1987 in at least a proposed form, would he consider moving the Bill through all stages today?

Mr. Foster: Mr. Speaker, we believe that generally the Bill is beneficial but it is a measure that has never been debated before. There have been concerns expressed by some provincial agencies. We want to see the legislation dealt with expeditiously but we prefer to see that done in the committee, as proposed before the House today.