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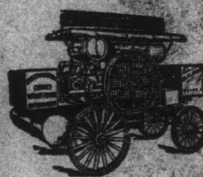
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THE DISCUSSION ON THE  
MILLER ANTI-BETTING BILL

Different Classes Who Supported  
and Opposed  
Bill

QUESTION OF BREEDING  
PLAYED IMPORTANT PART

Interesting Sketch of the Condi-  
tions During the  
Big Debate

Ottawa, April 16.—It might perhaps be assumed that after the exhaustive debate of the Miller, anti-gambling bill in the house, the latter part of the week nothing would be left to be said on the subject; also, that in the light of the fate which overtook the proposed measure, the question relative to race track gambling through the medium of the bookmaker, is a dead one.

But assuming that at least a goodly percentage of the members who supported the measure as it came from the special committee were actuated by a motive having its inspiration in an ethical line of reasoning apart from any form which the discussion took the floor of the house, and which seemed to be the case, it may be fairly judged that the question not only is not dead but that there is something further to be said in relation thereto.

To one who listened to the debate throughout, one circumstance in connection with the proceedings was impressive. That was that numerous conspicuous gentlemen on the government side of the chamber in particular and some of the opposition members as well, took no part in the discussion but in voting gave silent support to the bill. Apparently, these members recognized that there is a real evil in relation to the matter dealt with in the bill, but were not altogether satisfied with its terms, felt possibly, that structurally it was not perfect in placing too extreme limits upon human conduct but being unable to accept the spacious alternative of the substitute presented in the McCall amendment, gave support to the measure.

The advocates of the bill laid stress, in their arguments, on the great harm society suffers through persons who have not the money to spare, squandering their substance in race track gambling while the stock argument of those opposed to it was that to stop book making would stop racing and that would have an adverse effect on the breeding of thoroughbred horses.

But the gentlemen who took no active part in the matter and contented themselves with voting with the friends of the bill, seemed to be actuated by a consideration higher than any that was dealt with in the debate. As was subsequently learned from one of them, this was, that Canada has been proving very fast in the last few years and that as a result of that fact and of other contributing factors, a radical change in conditions has come upon society. One of these factors is that several of the states of the American union have of late passed legislation restricting race track gambling and this fact together with the great growth in population and vast increase in wealth, has had the effect of bringing into greater prominence than in the past, the objectionable features of gambling on the races; that is, greater activity on the part of book makers and increased ability to indulge the inclination to gamble have brought the evil into such prominence that the effect has been to elevate to a higher position than it has ever occupied before in the public mind of Canada, the moral or ethical phase of the question and has created the necessity of dealing with the new aspect of the situation in a manner calculated to protect society.

Therefore, while in years gone by small attention was paid to race track gambling because it was not then, a question large enough to arouse public sentiment, it has now reached that stage and people who give thought to the improvement of the moral tone of society are ranging themselves behind a movement to secure by legislative enactment, restriction of the evil. This was the feeling of those members who did not exactly like the bill but who supported it as being preferable to the substitute which proposed to limit bookmaking to racing enclosures during racing meetings, because they did not believe the substitute reached and effected a cure of the evil by which they believed society is menaced, but merely diminished the evil in some small measure.

But just now how far restriction should extend to achieve the desired protection of society against the evil of race track gambling was no doubt the splitting point which effected the defeat of the measure. The line seems not to have been finely enough drawn by the minister of justice, in his attempt to support many members who would no doubt have liked to have given their votes in favor of restriction had it not been that the bill to the opinion of the minister of justice, made it a criminal offense to make the most innocent kind of a wager.

The necessity for the encouragement of the breeders of thoroughbred horses and a repugnance for the idea of crystallizing into legislation of hard and fast rules of human conduct, played a conspicuous part in the consideration of the measure. There was no member who did not recognize the necessity for encouraging the breeding of thoroughbred horses, but there were many, to the credit of their good sense, be it said, who not only could not take any stock in the argument that permitting bookmakers to rob the public was necessary to such encouragement, but who were equally as disgusted that supposedly sane and sincere men would make such a spectacle of themselves as to stand on their feet and solemnly declare belief in such a theory, as they were to hear one member make the declaration that horse racing with the attendant features of race track gambling was the very foundation of British character.

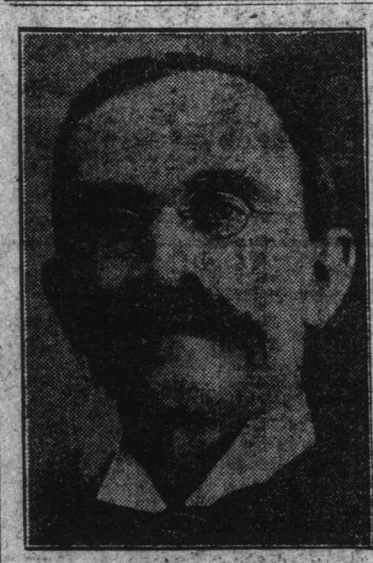
Among such members there were, however, numerous ones who no doubt felt that horse racing really is an encouragement to the breeding of thoroughbreds. Like the doubtless less believed that interest in racing is enhanced with the general public by the privilege of backing one's judgment as to which is the best horse in the race, and that to deprive the public of that privilege would affect racing adversely, particularly in the matter of gate receipts. Further, they perhaps were doubtful in their minds that the making of an ordinary bet or anything else is essentially immoral or calculated to lower the stan-



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dard of society, and consequently were opposed to restricting individual liberty to the extreme proposed by the bill. These drew a distinction between racing and betting on the results and gambling and carrying on gambling as a business. And they are the ones who realize that the conditions relative to horse racing have changed and that instead of as formerly, betting being a spice incident to racing, racing is now carried on in the interest of the business of gambling. Obviously, it would seem, the

retransposition of these positions relative to horse racing, the restoration of the conditions that formerly surrounded the sport and the elimination of the undoubted evil of the present day system, is the end that will have to be aimed at before there will be successful legislation for the regulation of racing.

The argument was heard during the debate that there is no precedent and no justification for passing legislation which interferes with the personal liberties of individuals by making a criminal offense an act that does not encroach upon the rights of another. Manifestly that is an absurd contention, in view of the fact that the criminal statutes are laden with evidence to the contrary, acts calculated to protect the individual against himself, either his own vicious instincts or his weaknesses. To prove this contention it is only necessary to cite the law, whereby one may interdict his fellow man against drinking. An absurd drinking by one man does not encroach upon the rights of another, yet the individual may be denied the privilege of drinking under statute which renders him liable to prosecution for a criminal offense if he violates the interdiction. The act is in itself, signed for his protection against himself, the same as would be the law forbidding him from squandering his substance on the races.

The statement was made many times during the debate that there was no large public sentiment in favor of the Miller bill, but the sincerity of that claim was shown by the frantic manner in which the members who said it flew to cover after Mr. Miller himself moved to kill the bill after it had, in his judgment, been so unanimously adopted. The bedlam of protests against no legislation at all, which emanated from the friends of race track gambling, constituted the strongest recognition that there is an evil, and that there is public sentiment behind the demand for its restriction.

That the principle of the Miller bill is not dead no one who follows the modern trend of society will seriously assert. There is no doubt that the question will be back in the house another session, probably in modified form. It may possibly take the form of absolute prohibition of bookmaking, but preserve the right of the individual to make an ordinary wager, by which the right of the individual to back his judgment of the merits of a horse would not be interfered with, and the encouragement to thorough breeding, if horse racing affords, such encouragement, would be fostered, while the evils that have grown up as the result of bookmaking would be eradicated.

But whether the measure shall take this form or some other, there will be one there, and if it does not pass there will be one there every other session until race track gambling as represented by the ingenious bookmaking system of the present day is abolished.

A man marries a woman to carry a burden for her, and what happens is she spends all her life trying to keep him well fed.

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