

*Criminal Code*

He said: Mr. Speaker, I believe that the purpose of my amendment is very clear. I also believe that there are many members of the House of Commons who support what I am seeking in this amendment, and when the vote on it takes place I hope that the majority will vote in its favour.

Clause 13 of Bill C-150 is the main part of this bill dealing with the question of lotteries. Its main effect is to liberalize the law of Canada with respect to lotteries, and it does this under several headings. Regardless of any views that some of us may have about lotteries generally, and I do have such views, it is not our purpose to oppose the attempt to widen the law so far as ordinary games of chance and things of that sort are concerned. We agree that if the law is to be widened with respect to office pools, raffles, bingos, games of chance and so on, there should be strict controls, and in that respect we think that the provisions of clause 13 are commendable.

However, Mr. Speaker, there are two things provided in clause 13 that many of us in the House of Commons do not like, and I make the strongest appeal I can to the Minister of Justice (Mr. Turner) to reconsider his position. The two things I refer to are the authority that is provided on the one hand for the federal government to conduct lotteries, and the authority provided on the other hand for provincial governments also to conduct lotteries.

Again, if I may multiply a few words to make our position clear, those of us who are speaking on this issue are not asking for any change in the government's position so far as lotteries generally are concerned, but we do ask this house to take a stand against state lotteries. That is the purpose of my amendment which seeks to remove from clause 13 paragraphs (a) and (b) of sub-section (1) of the proposed new section 179A. In taking this stand, Mr. Speaker, we do so not with any blue law approach but because, in the main, we feel that lotteries as a way of raising money for the state or as a way of helping people to win prizes are not good economics.

● (8:20 p.m.)

In our view state lotteries are nothing more than a form of taxation. In fact the one widespread lottery under public auspices being held in this country at this time is called a voluntary tax. The thing that is wrong about lotteries as a form of taxation is that it is the most regressive form that could

be imagined. That is saying something in this House of Commons because this government has done very well in dreaming up regressive forms of taxation. I think one of the worst we have ever had is the two per cent social development tax that is still being collected, even though parliament has not approved it. But lotteries are even worse than that. When lotteries are used by governments, federal, provincial or even municipal for that matter, for the purpose of raising taxes there is no relationship whatsoever to the ability of people to pay. In fact, those who are least able to pay are those who are enticed by the possibility of winning a prize. They are the people who can least afford to lose their money in this way and they are the ones who lose the most.

If people wish to take part in lotteries conducted by private organizations, by various charities and others on a voluntary basis, that is their business. But surely, it is something entirely different for the state to use lotteries as a means of raising revenue and for the state to put the stamp of approval on this method. The hope, of course, that the government has in resorting to lotteries is that people will participate because they hope they will win. The fact of the matter is most people lose in any kind of lottery. So does the state. The few examples that there are, are not being placed before us as reasons that we should pass this legislation. Reports from the state of New York indicate that the attempt there to raise money by way of a state lottery has not been successful. We hear many references to the Irish sweepstakes, but we do not hear much said about the great social improvements that have taken place in Ireland on the basis of money raised in the sweepstakes. The reason is clear: there are no such improvements. While we hear about the widows and others who win the lotteries held by the city of Montreal, there is no suggestion that the lotteries being carried on by the city have solved that city's financial problems.

We think that on every count this is the wrong way to go about things. In our view it ought not to be passed by this House of Commons. I recognize the government's position that this legislation is only permissive. The government argues that the passing of clause 13, and the eventual passing of this bill, does not bring federal or provincial lotteries into being. But permissive legislation has a way of being used. In my view there is no doubt that if this legislation is passed it is only a matter of time until provinces, under pressure, will resort to it. It can be only a matter of time