

Criminal Law Amendments

the Conservative Party formed the Government of that province, it again allowed liquor and cigarette companies to support and endorse sporting and athletic events.

I am sure the Hon. Member will appreciate what I was trying to do. We debate this issue very seriously in the House. As hon. Members have pointed out, it is not a particularly partisan discussion we are having today but it is one that indicates the grave concern of all Members of Parliament to ensure that drinking and driving is reduced and, hopefully, eliminated in this country.

As we speak about increasing the penalties associated with those who drink and drive, we are on the other hand encouraging in a variety of ways companies that sell liquor to support some of the more public athletic events in the country. There seems to be a certain hypocrisy in our society. I do not mean that any one Party is associated with that hypocrisy, but it exists in our society per se.

I think it is important to note that the New Democratic Party Government of Saskatchewan actually took steps to eliminate that type of support. I suspect that that might indicate the nature of our concern and the nature of the direction in which we would like to move.

Mr. Nunziata: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Hon. Member whether the New Democratic Party would be prepared to sever the drunk driving provisions from this Bill in order to ensure speedy passage, if not tomorrow then at the earliest opportunity when the House convenes after the Christmas recess.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, many organizations have indicated a deep concern and a wish to be heard regarding the provisions of this Bill. My concern is that this is a very technical Bill and the clauses relating to alcohol-related driving offences are very technical clauses. There are tens of thousands of people in this country who should be prosecuted in our courts but who get off because of a technicality in existing legislation.

I am not certain that it would be in the best interests of Canada to move such an important piece of legislation ahead without the appropriate scrutiny of the Canadian Bar Association for example. Those people who act as defence counsel or prosecutors should have an opportunity to indicate what they feel about the specific technical portions of this Bill.

On the other hand, that is an option that the House Leader of the New Democratic Party, in concert with the House Leaders of the Liberal and Conservative Parties, would probably be quite prepared to discuss. I would like to point out why it is we are hesitant about so enthusiastically rushing this Bill through at this particular point. I do not want to see those people who should in fact be penalized for drinking and driving getting off because of the technicalities which today exist in the tens of thousands.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: The Hon. Member for Winnipeg-Birds Hill (Mr. Blaikie) is rising on a question or a comment?

Mr. Blaikie: Mr. Speaker, I would like to make a comment on what my colleague, the Hon. Member for Kamloops-Shuswap (Mr. Riis), has said. What we ought to keep in mind today with respect to the timing of the Bill is not whether one Party could have introduced it at one time or another or whether the Government introduced it today when it could have done so two weeks ago. I think the timing is such that not only the Government and the political Parties but the Canadian society as a whole are arriving at a moment at which we now feel that something must be done.

At this point we are saying that the time has come, yes, but the time has come to do it right. Let us not do it on the last day before a recess. Let us have this legislation, which is so very important, go before the committee. Let us hear from the people who are concerned, such as the groups which have formed out of families that have been so tragically harmed by these kinds of events. Let us hear from people from the legal community. The time has come, but the time has come to do it right. I think that is what we are saying here today and, if they give it some thought, Hon. Members would agree with us on that.

We know that the Bill cannot become law by Christmas. Let us not kid ourselves or anyone else. Let us agree as a Parliament and as parliamentarians to get this Bill into committee and to come out of committee with the very best Bill possible so that having achieved this one part of the struggle against the kind of tragedies that we want to prevent, we can go on to some of the other issues which attend these problems, such as the whole question of alcohol advertising. Let us then move on to whatever the next stage may be. We have an automobile culture and we have an alcohol culture. Most, if not all of us, are part and parcel of those cultures. We have cities which are built around the automobile and we have a whole culture which is built around alcohol. Therefore, there are still serious steps which must be taken. This legislation is one step by which we should collectively dedicate ourselves to doing right. The examination which this legislation will get in committee will be a part of that.

● (1650)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Is the House ready for the question? Is the Hon. Member for York West (Mr. Marchi) rising on a question or comment, or is he rising on debate?

Mr. Marchi: On debate.

Mr. Malone: Filibuster.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: If no Member wishes to put any questions or make any comments, I will recognize the Hon. Member for York West on debate.

Mr. Sergio Marchi (York West): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate. I do not take very kindly the comments which the hon. gentlemen has just hollered across the floor. I will reiterate the comments of a previous speaker, that everyone in the House has an opportunity to participate in the debate. Every Member of the Chamber has a