

• (1630)

If we cannot get all-Party agreement to put the Bill through all stages today, I recommend that we go immediately to the Standing Committee on Agriculture where, with a few witnesses, we can ascertain that it is absolutely necessary for the viability of the racing industry. I thank you for allowing me to make those remarks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. John R. Rodriguez (Nickel Belt): Mr. Speaker, I just heard the Hon. Member for Mississauga West (Mr. Horner) refer to horse racing as the sport of kings. I suppose Members are wondering why a socialist would be speaking in support of this Bill. In fact, I feel some connection to the race track. Politicians have been called all parts of the anatomy of a horse, so I feel comfortable speaking to this Bill.

As a matter of fact, I remember a story about a chap who was at the race track. He was in line at the \$50 win ticket window. The fellow ahead of him in line asked for a \$50 ticket on number two to win. The fellow standing behind him tapped him on the shoulder and said: "Number two won't win". The fellow said: "Is that right?" and turned around to the ticket seller and said: "Give me another \$50 ticket on number two to win". The guy behind him tapped him on the shoulder again and said: "I know that you bet on number two but I suggest that you don't". The other chap said: "Okay, give me another \$50 on number two to win".

Finally, the fellow was so frustrated that he took him out of the line and said: "Look, there are six horses in this race. I told you that number two cannot win". The other fellow said: "How do you know number two cannot win?" And the other guy said: "I own number two". The other fellow said: "Well, it will be one slow race because I own the other five".

I know the common conception that is held by those who have no appreciation of the sport. Let us consider the contribution racing has given to this country. We have heard about the contribution in terms of the taxes that are collected. Over \$100 million in taxes is collected in Ontario. Look at its contribution to pride in Canada, with Northern Dancer, the greatest stud there ever was.

Let us consider the contribution made by the jockeys like Sandy Hawley and Michel Lachance. Look at the contribution we made to track and field in Canada. All the veterinarians here will know what I am talking about.

Criminal Code

I am supporting this Bill because we have a race track in the Sudbury area called Sudbury Downs. The population in the Sudbury basin is some 160,000. We do not have millions of people like there are in Mississauga West. We have a small population and the track must increase its revenues. If there are not enough people to come to the race track we must take racing to the population centres in northern Ontario.

That is what this Bill will provide. It would allow J. C. MacIsaac to show through satellite his racing in theatres in Thunder Bay, Sault Ste. Marie, Timmins, North Bay and any other community.

The track has not opened. There are some 300 people, including the grooms, the trainers and the drivers, who depend directly on the track for employment, as well as the farmers, the breeders and all the students who work part time when the track is operating.

Mr. Mayer: The people who supply the oats.

Mr. Rodriguez: The suppliers of feed for the horses.

It is important to the community. The track pays \$176,000 in municipal taxes to the community in which it is located. If the track is closed it cannot pay any municipal taxes.

While I do not see this activity as a major thrust toward tourism for creating challenging and interesting jobs, it is a priority for the region. Racing is a jewel in that presentation of tourism. It is another form of entertainment to attract tourists into the Sudbury basin.

I totally support the Bill. It has been long overdue. The horsemen at the track have already negotiated a contract with the Sudbury Downs whereby 50 per cent of the take from teletheatre betting would reflect itself in higher purses. Sudbury Downs needs to offer higher purses so it can attract more horses and provide more competitive racing that would result in greater attendance and greater revenues through the betting windows. I see this Bill as the saviour of Sudbury Downs.

The Bill states that the Minister will define the racing area for the track. Surely it will not be done unilaterally. Surely it will be done in consultation with the various racing commissions across the country. One has to assume that common sense will prevail because no one wants to kill the goose that lays the golden egg. I am quite sure that when the regions or areas for the teletheatres are established they will take into consideration where the track is located and what areas racing should be shown.