

SECTION 5.—RESTRICTION OF ILLEGAL OFF-COURSE BETTING CARRIED ON THROUGH THE TELEPHONE SERVICE

SUPPRESSION OF ILLEGAL OFF-COURSE BETTING

129. Not merely as a corollary to the establishment of the totalizator system for the transaction of off-course betting business, but also as an independent issue, there arises the question of the suppression of the present illegal off-course betting system. Its total elimination experience shows will be difficult, if not impossible. That it can be reduced to a reasonable minimum, we are encouraged to believe.

130. Primarily, suppression must be effected by intensified and sustained police action, supplemented and reinforced by other appropriate measures. Amongst the foremost of these is the denial of the use of the telephone for illegal purposes. In a very material sense the use of a telephone or telephones is an essential to the maintenance of an illegal system of betting. It is mainly through that medium that business is done. It is through that medium that information necessary or desirable for the efficient conduct of the business as a whole through the country is disseminated. We are not at all impressed by the suggestion that the necessity for the maintenance of secrecy makes it impossible for the Post and Telegraph Department to know when a telephone is being used for illicit bookmaking. There are other means besides listening-in by which the mind of the Department is or could be informed. For instance, the abnormal volume of toll calls made in connection with certain telephones on race days is a fairly certain indication that the calls are made upon a telephone employed in an illicit business. There are other methods.

131. In a country like this where the Post and Telegraph services are under the control of a Department of State, supine inactivity on the part of the Department whilst its amenities are being used for unlawful purposes is unjustifiable and wrong. Whilst, therefore, we cannot but respect the obligation of inviolate secrecy which the maintenance of public confidence in the Department requires, we think that there are ways and means by which, without any breach of obligation, the amenities of the Department could be denied to people who use those amenities for illegal purposes. We suggest that the regulations of the Department be amplified by providing that the Department is, of its own initiative, to take action whenever it has reasonable cause to believe that a telephone is being illicitly employed and that it shall do so when called upon so to do by the police. Action in the form hereafter proposed could be taken through the medium of the Police Department.