

A STATEMENT ON LOTTERIES

Adopted by the Second Biennial Convention of the Lutheran Church in America--Canada Section
Port Arthur, Ontario, June 23-24, 1965

RESOLUTIONS:

WHEREAS, There are increasing demands for lotteries to help finance the growing cost of health and welfare services, e.g. the Report of the Hall Commission Report Royal Commission on Health Services;

WHEREAS, The Joint Parliamentary Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Capital and Corporal Punishment and Lotteries in its report on lotteries, July 31, 1956, rejected the institution of a state lottery;

WHEREAS, Lotteries in other societies have had a deteriorating effect and have been subjected to attention by the criminal element, thereby creating problems for law enforcement authorities;

WHEREAS, It is an illusion that financial returns from lotteries can help significantly to meet the demand of Canadian society for increased health and welfare services;

WHEREAS, Lotteries, as does all gambling, weaken man's relationship to man and threaten a basic premise of the good society, namely the Christian and humanitarian concept of social responsibility for one's neighbor:

WHEREAS, As a Christian community, we believe that participation in lotteries of any nature is a denial of Christian social responsibility.

WHEREAS, As a Christian community, we believe it is a Christian duty to take unto one's self the need of one's neighbor instead of taking from him;

RESOLVED, That Lutheran Church in America--Canada Section record its opposition to the legislation of lotteries under government, private, or church auspices.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Increasing demands for lotteries to help finance the growing cost of health and welfare services have been noted. In particular, there is in the first volume of the Report of the Royal Commission on Health Services, commonly known as the Hall Commission Report, a suggestion that provinces might use lotteries to augment costs for health care services.

We draw attention to the finding of the Joint Parliamentary Committee of the Senate and House of Commons on Capital and Corporal Punishment and Lotteries. In its report on lotteries on July 31, 1956, the committee concluded,

that no useful purpose could be achieved by the institution of a state lottery in Canada. It considered that the proper role of the state is to control and regulate such gambling activity as is permitted to private citizens by the general law, and that it is not appropriate for the state to provide facilities for gambling to the public. The committee includes, in the prohibition of state lotteries in Canada, those which might be operated by provincial and municipal governments as well as the federal government.

Only one organization favoring state lotteries presented a brief to the aforementioned Joint Parliamentary Committee of the Senate and House of Commons. This organization frankly stated that state lotteries should be set up for the purpose of providing facilities for gambling and not as a means of raising revenue for any purpose. In opposition to this point of view, there is substantial evidence to indicate that control by regulation does not prevent exploitation by the criminal element in our society. Instead there develop increasing pressures on law enforcement authorities with resultant higher costs to the tax-paying public. If the law cannot be enforced, then there develop poor attitudes toward the law and law enforcement. In addition, it is contended that legalized gambling through lotteries will not stop illegal sales of foreign sweepstake tickets or fraudulent lotteries. The Canadian Welfare Council brief to the aforementioned Joint Parliamentary Committee, under date of April 24, 1955, pointed to the danger of counterfeiting and said, "A large proportion of the so-called Irish Sweepstakes tickets seized by the police in this country are counterfeit. Conducting the lotteries under government auspices would not avoid this danger."

There is an illusion that financial returns from lotteries and other forms of gambling will provide a much needed source of revenue. It can be readily demonstrated that lotteries are an uneconomical way to raise money. The total income of the Irish hospitals from the Irish Sweepstakes counting all money now gathered in Canada, United States, Britain and elsewhere, amounts to about four million dollars a year. This is less than 19 per cent of the money paid by those who bought genuine sweepstake tickets, excluding the sums spent on counterfeit tickets. The *Financial Post* of October 12, 1963, said, "The painful fact is that Canadian sweepstakes equal to that created by Ireland for 33 years would keep Canadian hospitals going only for four days, and not a cent toward new construction." Another fact is that often those people who engage in gambling are those who are least able to afford the financial cost. The low-income groups and the deprived portion of our population seem to be most susceptible to gambling. Thus lotteries may contribute indirectly to the cost of health and welfare services. At the same time this method to raise public funds usually means that those least able to pay are the ones who provide the funds. Thus, those least able to pay are invited to carry a disproportionate burden of the cost of health and welfare services in relation to those with more ability to pay.

Law enforcement authorities and the experience of a number of countries indicate that gambling in any form has a deteriorating effect on society. It is pernicious in its ultimate effect and creates a false sense of social responsibility. There is no substitute for services support by public funds and/or enlightened voluntary giving. The fact that a growing number of the public prefer an illusion is no argument for legalization of lotteries. An unenlightened majority will most probably be wrong, especially when it ignores the experience of history.

We hold the conviction that gambling, even of a minor nature, is contrary to the Christian ethic. The commandment, "Thou shall not covet" makes clear the Biblical teaching that men are not to seek their own material advancement at the expense of others. It violates the Christian and humanitarian concept of the interdependent society, namely that society has a responsibility for individual welfare and that the individual has a responsibility for contributing to the common good. For the Christian, gambling is seen as catering to man's selfishness. Any service to man based on personal desire for self-gratification weakens man's relationship to man. Gambling, for the Christian, does not witness to the reality of Christian community. It is a denial of Christian social responsibility. The Christian motivation is to take unto himself the need of his neighbour instead of taking from his neighbor. Not hope for gain but gratitude for God's fit to man in Jesus Christ causes the Christian to exercise Christian social responsibility.