

Politicians Fear Gambling Issue Will Dominate 1964 Campaign

By NORMAN KEMPSTER
 United Press International
 OLYMPIA, Wash. (UPI) — A man with sporting blood and a minimum of advance information can place a bet with a professional or semi-pro gambler in almost any town in Washington State.

In most cases, the wager will have to be a small one. Five cents in a pinball machine that pays off across the counter is a common venture. But there is a possibility for faster action as well. Many towns have cigar stores or taverns which double as headquarters for football and baseball pools. And a number of private clubs hold "Members Only" gambling parties which include dice tables, roulette wheels and blackjack games.

Of course, it is all illegal. But most towns have what is called a "tolerance policy" under which the authorities look the other way while the money is changing hands.

Games Pay Taxes
 It is a comfortable pattern. The games are small and their operators usually pay taxes and license fees to local authorities. The revenue from the gambling is the difference between a balanced budget and deficit spending for some towns.

Officials usually say license fees with a set rate are preferable to under the table "protection money" and bribes.

Then Mayor Gordon Clinton of Seattle rocked the boat. He told the city's police to enforce the anti-gambling laws which had been on the books for years.

Clinton's order shut down pinball machines, removed punchboards from tavern counters, closed up bingo parlors and padlocked cardrooms in the state's largest city.

Gambling Closed
 It also started a chain of events which made gambling and the tolerance policy the hottest political issue in the state. In chronological order, here is what happened after Clinton's edict went into effect Jan. 1, 1963:

The legislature passed a bill legalizing pinball machines, punchboards, pulltabs, cardrooms and bingo games.

Dr. Homer Humiston, a physician and former city councilman from Tacoma, the state's third largest city, launched a referendum campaign aimed at knocking the gambling act off the state's lawbooks.

Humiston collected 82,955 signatures on referendum petitions. That was far more than the 48,630 signatures needed to place the issue on the 1964 general election ballot.

On June 21 the petitions were stolen from a locked vault in the State Capitol building here.

Petitions Stolen
 The theft of the petitions shocked Washington's citizens.



WANTS LAW ENFORCEMENT
 Mayor Gordon Clinton of Seattle is shown in a photo taken in 1959. He has told city police to enforce anti-gambling laws, which have been on the books for years, and as a result has introduced the gambling issue into the 1964 campaign. (UPI)

from Gov. Albert D. Rosellini down.

The public generally assumed the documents had been stolen by supporters of the new law who hoped the action would keep the issue off the ballot.

The thieves cracked the safe with an ease which investigating officers said could come only with years of practice. Police assume the petitions were taken by professional bank bandits.

The criminals are still at large. The petitions are assumed to have been destroyed.

Washington law requires a careful name-by-name check of signatures on referendum petitions. Only the signatures of registered voters can be accepted. If a person signs a petition twice, his name is removed both times and his signature is not counted at all.

The check had not been made before the petitions were stolen. However, Secretary of State Victor A. Meyers certified the referendum to the ballot anyway. He said the stolen petitions were certain to have contained enough valid signatures to qualify the measure.

Supporters of the controversial law protested that Meyers had no legal authority to take the stand he did. They took the case to court.

Meyers Upheld
 Meyers won the first round. Superior Court Judge Charles T. Wright ruled that the certification was legal. He said if the referendum did not appear on the ballot it would "place a premium on the commission of a felony."

Wright's decision was appealed to the state supreme court. Oral arguments are scheduled Oct. 28 before the nine-judge tribunal.

When the city of Seattle put the lid on the tolerance policy, the effects were immediate and economic.

To begin with, the city treasury lost about \$400,000 which gamblers had paid each year for tolerance policy license fees. Operators of pinball machines, card rooms and bingo games were forced to go underground or go out of business.

Cigar stores and lunch counters which had depended on pinball and punchboard revenues to operate at a profit were hurt. So were the mechanics who service pinball machines.

Council Unhappy
 The city council was unhappy because of the lost revenue. Mayor Clinton issued his decree over the opposition of a majority of the council members.

The Teamsters union, which represents pinball mechanics, was unhappy. So was the retail clerks union.

City officials in towns which had a tolerance policy and wanted to keep it became alarmed. Clinton's order was strictly a local one, of course, but other towns were afraid the fess in Seattle might force them to begin enforcing the state's anti-gambling laws too.

Together, city officials, unions and gamblers made a powerful lobby.

The legislature listened. A gambling bill was drafted and rushed through the Senate. It attracted little attention until it reached the Upper House floor for debate during a Saturday afternoon session.

The measure was approved by a 32-15 vote although Sen. A. L. Rasmussen (D-Tacoma) protested that "even two-bit gambling" was a million dollar illegal business.

Invites Crime
 The bill attracted headlines when Seattle Police Chief Frank Ramon told a House committee that the measure was "an open invitation to syndicated crime to come into the state."

Ramon added, "I know it will take advantage of that invitation."

The committee — which generally favored the bill — adopted a set of amendments which Chairman Ed Morrissey (R-Yakima) insisted would meet Ramon's objections.

However, opponents of the measure like Rep. Don Miles (R-Olympia) insisted that even the amended bill would pave the way for "wide open gambling."

The bill passed the House by a 62-36 vote on the next to the last day of the regular legislative session. The Senate approved the House amendments less than an hour later and sent the measure to the governor.

Rosellini said he didn't like the bill and would not sign it. But in a deft exercise of political fence-sitting, he permitted it to become law without his signature.

Regret Voting
 Most of the 94 legislators who voted for the bill now wish they had stayed in bed the day the proposal was on the calendar. The theft of the petitions has convinced a great many citizens that opponents of the bill were right when they warned of organized crime.

The gambling issue is sure to be the most explosive of the 1964 election campaign and many lawmakers are afraid their careers may be destroyed by the blast.

Just how much the history of Washington State will be changed by the chain of events which started in Seattle, nobody knows now. But most seasoned politicians fear the flashing lights of pinball machines will dazzle the voters and keep them from seeing anything else next fall.

Ex-Teacher Indicates Problem in New Role
 SPRINGFIELD, Mass. (UPI) — Former teacher Walter English has problems in his new job as intergroup relations specialist for this western Massachusetts city.

A letter requesting him to speak to a youth group asked that he make the problems of juvenile delinquency, alcoholism and illegitimacy "more real to us" because "they haven't happened much here."

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