

**SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF GAMBLING NEWSLETTER**

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**THE SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF GAMBLING**

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The Society for the Study of Gambling was formed in 1977 to provide a forum for those concerned with research into gambling, to promote its scientific study especially as far as the psychological, social and economic aspects are concerned, and to inform and educate the public about these matters.

The membership of the Society is drawn from a wide circle of people who have an interest in various aspects of gambling. They range from social workers and psychiatrists who deal with 'compulsive gamblers', to members of the gambling industry. It is a condition of the Society that there should be freedom of opinion and practice among its members so that the Society does not take any particular stance in relation to gambling.

The Society holds regular scientific meetings which have, so far, always taken place in London. Further information concerning the Society can be obtained from the Honorary Secretary.

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AMUSEMENT-WITH-PRIZES AND GAMING MACHINES

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Development of the Coin Machine Industry since 1960

The Betting and Gaming Act 1960 came into operation on 1st January 1961 and regularised the operation of two types of coin operated machines:

Jackpot gaming machines, which were permitted in premises where there was no public access, provided that all stakes were applied to the payment of prizes or for uses other than private gain. This effectively limited the use of jackpot gaming machines to members' clubs run by the members, for the members. It also prohibited the machine owner from sharing the profits derived from the machine and limited him to charging a fixed, predetermined rental; and

Amusement-with-prizes machines, which could be installed in public places, provided the occupier of the premises first obtained a permit for amusement-with-prizes from the local authority.

The conditions applying to the use of jackpot gaming machines were basically that not more than two could be available for use in any premises and the maximum stake was 6d (2-1/2p) although there was no limit on the maximum prize.

Amusement-with-prizes machines were limited to a maximum stake of 1/- (5P) and a maximum cash prize of 1/- (5p) although there was no limit on non-monetary prizes. It was unlawful to carry an advantage from one game to another.

Prize bingo and similar group games were permitted in premises covered by a permit for amusements-with-prizes and were subject to a maximum stake of 1/- (5P), a maximum cash prize of 1/- (5p) and a maximum "take" per game of 50/- (£2.50). Once again there was no limit to the value of non-monetary prizes.

The 1960 Act represented a very radical piece of legislation and in the next four years it was found necessary to modify the Act in order to eliminate certain anomalies which became apparent.

The first of these amendments was in 1962 when the Lotteries and Gaming Act incorporated a definition of the term "private gain" so far as it applied to jackpot gaming machines. This arose from the fact that, in relation to a totally different matter, the Courts had ruled that the collective gain of club members amounted to private gain for the purposes of the Act. In 1963 there was a Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act which introduced a large number of changes in the laws relating to betting and lotteries but left the law relating to coin operated machines virtually unchanged. At this time the Government conducted a survey into the number of machines in clubs and this showed a total of 24,700 although BACTA is aware that many clubs did not respond to the Government's request for information.

The Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1964 closed a loophole relating to jackpot gaming machines and confirmed that the maximum stake was 6d (2-1/2p). It also introduced a specific category of amusement-with-prizes machine which had previously been included with amusement-with-prizes games such as prize bingo. The new Act came into force in October 1965 when the maximum stake and the maximum money prize was left at 1/-(5p), but a maximum value of 5/-(25P) was imposed on the non-monetary prize. Local authorities were also given powers to restrict the scope of a permit to cover amusement-with-prizes machines only and, in the case of premises other than amusement arcades, to limit the numbers.

When framing the Betting and Gaming Act 1960 the Government had assumed that permits for amusement-with-prizes machines would be sought only by amusement arcades but during the succeeding years a substantial number of premises such as public houses and working mens' cafes obtained permits and installed machines - initially second-hand American and German machines converted to meet British requirements. In 1962 the case of Capper v Baldwin confirmed that the fruit machine could be an amusement-with-prizes and another case in Bradford established that the licensee of a public house had the right to seek a permit for amusement-with-prizes. These two decisions accelerated the installation of amusement-with-prizes machines in public houses and, to a lesser extent, in amusement arcades and cafes.

This new demand for machines led to the development of a UK manufacturing industry which gradually eliminated the demand for imported machines and led to a healthy export business.

A major revision of the laws relating to casino gaming, licenced bingo clubs and gaming machines took place in 1968. So far as coin operated machines were concerned the Gaming Act 1968 came into operation in stages between 1969 and 1970. The Act established the Gaming Board of Great Britain to regulate and supervise all forms of gaming. It required anyone supplying gaming machines and certain other types of coin operated machines to be certificated by the Board. The certification procedures involve a very detailed inquiry into the personal lives of directors, major shareholders and those directly concerned with the installation of gaming machines in other peoples' premises, enquiries into possible relationships with undesirables and a close scrutiny of the company accounts. Certificates could not, and still cannot, be obtained by anyone controlled by an overseas company or anyone who is thought to be acting on behalf of a person who would, himself, be refused a certificate. There is no appeal against the refusal or revocation of a certificate.

The stimulation of demand by means of profit-sharing arrangements for the supply of gaming machines and pintables has been prohibited.

The types of clubs permitted to have gaming machines have been defined and such clubs must be either licensed or registered under the Act. There is a strict control on the removal of money from such machines and, for the protection of players, the minimum percentage payout must be stated on the machine. The maximum stake was, for the first time since 1960, increased from 6d (2-1/2p) to 1/-(5p).

So far as amusement-with-prizes machines were concerned the stake remained unchanged at 1/-(2-1/2p) and the non-monetary/token prize was frozen at 5/1(25p) although the maximum cash prize was increased to 2/-(10p). The exchange of tokens for prizes was carefully regulated so as to avoid any contravention of the laws relating to maximum cash prizes.

Despite repeated warnings by the Trade Associations during the time the Gaming Bill was being considered by Parliament the Act failed to take account of a number of traditional game features such as "hold", "nudge" and "games within a game" which had been developed on the electro-mechanical machines of that time. In order to overcome the numerous "grey areas" created by the Act (which could have resulted in an unprecedented number of test cases) the Gaming Board issued a set of Guidelines to their inspectorate in 1969 to indicate the advice they would give to the Trade and to the police in the event that they were consulted.

Since these Guidelines largely reflect the intention of Parliament, whilst recognising the problems faced by the industry, they have been universally accepted and are now reinforced by the BACTA Code for Manufacturers adopted in 1973. This establishes procedures for dealing with complaints about machines thought to be in breach of the Gaming Act or of the Gaming Board's Guidelines.

Over the years the Home Secretary has used his powers to make Statutory Instruments to make small increases in the levels of stakes and prizes as follows:

- \* 1975 - the maximum cash prize for an amusement-with-prizes machine was increased to 15p and the non-monetary/token prize to 40p;
- \* 1976 - the maximum stake for a jackpot gaming machine was increased to 10p and the maxima for amusement-with-prizes machines were increased to 20p cash or a 50p non-monetary/token prize. In the same year the industry adopted a voluntary limit of £100 on the maximum jackpot prize for club machines;
- \* 1978 - the maxima for amusement-with-prizes machines were increased to 50p cash or a £1 non-monetary/token prize;
- \* 1981 - the maximum stake for amusement-with-prizes machines was increased to 10p and the maximum prizes to £1 cash or £2 non-monetary/token prize;
- \* 1984 - the maximum prizes for amusement-with-prizes machines were increased to £1.50 cash or £3 non-monetary or token prize.

#### The Effect of Gaming Machine Licence Duty and VAT on Gaming Machine Numbers

Accurate numbers for gaming machines have been available only since 1966 when an annual duty of £75 was first applied to jackpot machines on sixpenny play (£37.50 for 3d machines).

In 1969 the total number of jackpot machines licensed by Customs and Excise was approximately 39,000 but in October 1969 the gaming machine licence duty was increased to £100 for the first machine and £300 for the second machine in a club. As a result of this

charge the numbers fell in 1970 to 34,000 and continued falling until 1972 when they had reduced to 32,300. Thereafter they rose slowly to a total of 43,000 in 1982 but once again, after a series of massive increases in gaming machine licence duty in three successive years, they fell in 1984 to a total of 40,200.

Amusement-with-prizes machines first became subject to gaming machine licence duty in 1969 when the rate for the first machine in any premises was £25 and £150 for all others. This applied to machines played for 6d (2-1/2p) and 1/- (5p) but those played for less than 6d (2-1/2p) paid only half this rate. In order to meet the special problems of seasonal seaside arcades, special licences were available for 1d machines covering the holiday season period March to October.

Initially a total of 133,900 machines, including the holiday season machines, were licensed but this figure fell steadily until 1973 when it had reached approximately 125,000. However, in 1973 VAT was applied to the takings of amusement-only machines but not to gaming machines. This led to many arcades replacing their amusement-only machines by amusement-with-prizes machines and this move back to amusement-with-prizes machines was reinforced during that year by decimalisation and the replacement of 1d by 1p as the boundary for the holiday season licence qualification. The numbers of amusement-with-prizes machines began to rise steadily until they reached a total of 130,000 in 1978. By this time rising costs had made it impossible to operate a seasonal arcade on 1p and 2p machines only. The number of holiday season licensed machines began to fall and they were replaced by 5p stake machines or by machines giving two goes for 5p.

During this time there was a steady decline in the operation of prize bingo arcades because the levels of stakes and prizes for party games such as prize bingo had been increased only marginally. This was accentuated by the increasing competition from prize bingo played in licensed bingo halls and resulted in many prize bingo arcades converting wholly or partly to machine arcades. Consequently the numbers of amusement-with-prizes machines began to rise again until 1982 when they were hit by two massive increases in the rates of gaming machine licence duty in successive years. The decline in 1983 would have been even more marked but for a growing tendency for licensed bingo halls to seek "directions" under Section 32 of the Gaming Act 1968 to replace their jackpot gaming machines by a greater number of amusement-with-prizes machines. It is estimated that in 1983 alone a total of 9,000 amusement-with-prizes machines were installed in licensed bingo clubs. There are, of course, an unknown number of 1p and 2p play machines in amusement arcades, mainly at the seaside, but since they are exempt from gaming machine licence duty, they no longer figure in the Customs and Excise returns. However, it is generally estimated that their total number is no more than 2 to 3 thousand. The best estimates of numbers of amusement-with-prizes machines in all types of amusement arcades is 28,800 and in public houses 71,000.

#### The Rise and Fall of Video Machines

A short craze for table-tennis type games played on television screens developed during the mid-1970s but it was brief! This was followed in 1978 by the development of a new generation of

coin-operated video games which led eventually to the game known as Space Invader and a massive boom in all types of computer-based games with programmes ranging from space war to guiding a frog across a busy main road. At their peak the numbers of these coin-operated games probably reached a total of 150,000 nationally but this fell rapidly during the latter half of 1982. It is estimated that present day numbers are in the region of 30,000.

During the boom time these video games "supported" the other coin operated equipment but now this support is no longer available and the effects of restricted spending due to the recession is being felt by operators and manufacturers alike. Consequently, the numbers of amusement-with-prizes machines in amusement arcades are falling and machine sales have been cut by more than half during the past year.

#### Changes in Machine Design

When the gaming laws were first updated in the early 1960s all gaming machines were mechanically operated and the reel combinations were determined by the random actions of a series of springs and ratchets. By the late 1960s a majority of amusement-with-prizes machines were electro-mechanical and incorporated features which gave a player the chance to extend the play and possibly win a better prize within the given limits. The chance factors were, however, determined by the mechanical action of the machine.

Electronic machines have increased the range of play features and therefore the duration of the game. The determination of winners is still a matter of chance but in order to achieve the minimum percentage payout required by the Gaming Board and others it is necessary for a machine's memory to increase or decrease the availability of features which enhance the prizes. There are no diabolically predetermined programmes evolved by designers familiar with the theories of operant conditioning - machines are designed to provide a form of relaxation which can be extended by a player's winnings.

#### The Future

The population of this country is generally having more and more leisure time but, despite more than 100 years of education provided free of charge by the State, many people have very little idea of what to do with this leisure time. Leisure facilities such as squash clubs, etc., have mushroomed in recent years but attract only a small percentage of the population. The same is true of other sports clubs, drama clubs and cultural activities generally. Many young people seek ready-made participation in some form of activity as a means of occupying at least a part of their leisure time.

Coin operated machines can fill part of that need and it is BACTA's view that all concerned should be seeking a controlled but practical way of providing facilities for young and old alike.

YOUNG OFFENDERS AND GAMBLING/VIDEO GAME PLAYING

Graham Huff and Frances Collinson\*

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(1) A Survey in a Youth Custody Centre

The results of a survey of the gambling and video game playing behaviour of 100 consecutive admissions to HM Youth Custody Centre, Feltham are reported. It was found that of the 100 trainees, 60 replied that they did gamble and 40 said they did not. Exactly the same pattern of reply was found for the video section of the questionnaire. 23% of those who gambled, and 21% of those who played video games, said that they had at some time committed an offence in order to obtain money to finance their habit. These 2 "criminal" sub-groups were compared with the "non-criminal" gambling and video-players groups respectively, "Criminal" gamblers were different from "non-criminal" gamblers in their responses to 6 out of 19 possible questions while "criminal" video players gave different replies from the "non-criminal" video players to 9 out of 16 possible questions.

Both the "criminal" gamblers and video-players reported in common that they spent all of their money, indulged in their respective interests to a greater extent than their friends, considered their behaviour to be a problem now and also that it had been a problem, significantly more than their "non-criminal" counterparts. However, there were no significant differences between either the "criminal" gamblers or the "criminal" video players from their "non-criminal" fellows in terms of the number of previous convictions they had; the average for this general group of gamblers and video-player being around 7, which was itself no different from the figure for the entire n=100 sample. Similarly, in terms of the type of offence for which the sample was currently serving a custodial sentence, there were no significant differences between the "criminal" and "non-criminal" gamblers and video-players, is those who gambled, or played videos, tended to be serving sentences either for violence or theft, which again reflected the pattern for the whole n=100 sample.

These figures should, however, be put into some perspective. Out of the entire sample, 14% and 13% respectively said that they had committed offences specifically either to gamble or play video games. Such rates should be compared with those reported in a survey of drinking behaviour based upon very similar questions, and also conducted in Feltham, by Hollin (1983). 38% of his sample of 100 trainees reported drinking immediately before committing either their present or previous offence, and 36% of the sample also claimed to have some degree of problem with alcohol. Hollin, however, points out that even although such a substantial proportion of the sample thought that their drinking and their involvement in crime were related, a direct causal link

between alcohol and crime has yet to be proved, Is it has not so far been conclusively demonstrated that drinking leads to criminal behaviour or vice versa, or indeed if there is any relationship at all between the two events.

Exactly the same observations may be made about the data yielded by the present survey, and further investigation is necessary before any firm conclusions may be drawn. At this juncture, what may be said is that (assuming that the self-report data relied exclusively upon in both the Hollin and the present study are reliable), it appears that gambling and video game playing is a considerably less serious problem for young offenders than is heavy alcohol intake.

## (2) A Profile of a Delinquent Fruit Machine Addict

Mark, 19 years old, is currently serving a youth custody sentence for theft. He is the second eldest of an East End family of five. There is no history of gambling amongst other members of the family except father, who has an occasional 50p bet on horses.

Mark began thieving at the age of 8 years, stealing from shops, and by the age of responsibility at 10 years old, had graduated to taking the lead off roofs. The pattern of offending has continued consistently, now embracing TDA and Burglary. He says that all the offences committed in the past few years were purely for gain and the money invariably spent on fruit machines.

He first acquired the flavour for these machines when, as a young child, he accompanied his parents to their caravan at a seaside resort. They gave to him and his sister a daily allowance to spend in the site arcade where he spent the greater part of his holiday playing and watching others. As he grew older, he noticed these machines appearing in local cafes and railway stations, and arcades springing up in the High Street. The same fascination persisted, although at this stage he never truanted but simply spent his pocket money and proceeds from his illegal activities on them.

When he started work at 16 years old and this form of gambling was a noticeable problem his concerned parents attempted to control it. Dad met him from work each day, escorted him home and rationed his wages. This worked well and when they thought his routine had stabilized, they released their grip. Mark immediately recommenced gambling and his distraught mother phoned the Samaritans, who recommended Gamblers Anonymous. Mark was taken to his local branch by mum and continued to attend for several weeks. He enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and meeting other gamblers who appeared to understand his problem. Unfortunately he was still gambling heavily and when his parents refused to lend him any further money he took an overdose. The tranquilizer tablets he took had been prescribed for him by his GP - his mother had insisted that he sought help in controlling his erratic behaviour arising from his attempts to obtain money to continue his compulsive pastime., His doctor gave no other advice or aid.

The shock of his attempted suicide moved Mark and his family to renew their efforts to control his habit. He got a new job in a cinema but unfortunately there was a fruit machine in the foyer and he was soon stealing from the cash till to feed it. He was sacked and another custodial sentence followed. On release his social worker obtained a flat for him as his family had withdrawn their support.

This is the point at which the pattern of his life has been set and it continued up to the present sentence. Initially he was given £300 to decorate and furnish his flat; this was spent on the machines and his flat remains sparsely furnished by handouts from family and friends. He buys clothes only when he has to produce receipts for his social worker and all further grants for decorating from his local council have been spent on gambling. He collects about £30 dole money each week which disappears into the arcade machines immediately, lasting about 2 hours. He has no food at all in his flat, eating with family members in return for errands and favours. whilst still stealing small amounts of shopping money from these same relatives. He stays in his flat when broke, venturing forth nightly to burgle and steal items from cars to obtain money for short bursts of play in his local arcade. He has never won more than £10 consecutively from the machines and never goes home with money in his pocket.

He doesn't play any club machines and is satisfied with his small gains as the interest arises more from playing than winning, although he needs an element of chance as he confines himself to fruit machines only. When his last pennies have gone, he hangs around watching others play, helping old ladies to get the best chance from the machines' and extending his play with handouts.

Nearly all of his friends similarly spend their time in arcades and are mostly always in trouble. Mark would like to extend his circle of friends to include others who spend their leisure time in pubs, but however much money he had in his pocket would be spent on a fruit machine (less an initial 1/2 pint of lager) if he attempts to join them. He, therefore, by his habit excludes himself from their company.

After discharge from the present sentence, he plans to tackle his addiction using his discharge allowance to stock up his fridge, obtaining a job as soon as possible with the knowledge he gained from participating in a Job Skills Course, and paying off debts incurred with friends and £1000 arrears from a mail order catalogue. He does not intend returning to CA for help, although he has been attending their meetings inside, as their conditions are too demanding. Mark is concerned solely with controlling his addiction to fruit machines and sees no evil or problems with any other forms of gambling, as he has never experienced their compulsive properties.

FRUIT MACHINE GAMBLING AMONG SCHOOLCHILDREN

Emanuel Moran

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A survey of the incidence of gambling and associated problems, as observed by the teachers in the secondary schools in one London borough, showed that 60% of the schools were aware of the participation of their pupils in some form of gambling (Moran, 1983). It was found that the most common type of gambling that the children took part in was on machines in amusement arcades and in other places such as cafes, fish and chip shops and snack bars. There was general agreement that this was a problem mainly among boys.

Among the comments made by the teachers concerning the factors responsible for young people using these gambling facilities were the following: "A warm convivial atmosphere away from the streets", "Lack of discipline in the home", "Demoralisation at home as a result of unemployment and poor social conditions".

As far as the consequences of the gambling were concerned, truancy and fights in the playground because of gambling debts were high on the list.

In order to take the matter further, a survey was performed of a sample of amusement arcades, cafes and fish and chip shops in the borough where the original survey of the schools was done. The finds were as follows:

(i) A tally of the machines in the amusement arcades of the borough showed that, on average, 90% of them were fruit machines. In a considerable number of the arcades, all the machines were fruit machines. In the others, a few video games machines were interspersed among the fruit machines but they were not much in use.

(ii) A considerable number of amusement arcades were serving food at a very cheap price.

(iii) While most of the arcades had a notice stating that young persons under the age of either 18 years, or sometimes 16 years, would not be admitted unless accompanied by an adult, a considerable number of young people, unaccompanied by adults, were playing in the arcades.

(iv) The number of cafes, fish and chip shops and snack bars which had at least one fruit machine was about ten times the number of amusement arcades in the borough involved.

(v) The fruit machines in fish and chip shops were extensively played by relatively young children in the lunch hour.

There seems little doubt that the high incidence of gambling on machines among schoolchildren and the problems that were associated with this in the locality which was surveyed, were related to the

fact that it was an area where machines were very extensively available. Indeed, it is one of the areas of London where there are more arcades than in the West End.

The dangers of fruit machines have been recognised for some time (Royal Commission on Betting, Lotteries and Gaming, 1951) and this has been responsible for the fact that jackpot machines have been confined to licensed premises under the control of the Gaming Board so that children cannot have access to them. The evidence now indicates that amusement with prizes (AWP) fruit machines are no less dangerous; the difference is only a matter of degree rather than of kind.

It would therefore be sensible to exclude all types of fruit machine, including the AWP variety, from all places which are not under the control of the Gaming Board, particularly those open to the street with free public access, and restrict them to premises licensed for gaming. In this way they would not be available to children and could only be played by adults.

#### REFERENCES

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Royal Commission on Betting, Lotteries and Gaming (1951): Report. HMSO, London.

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#### UPDATE

McClure, Robert F. and Mears, F.Gary (1984)  
'Video Game Players: Personality Characteristics and Demographic Variables'  
Psychological Reports, 55, 271-276.

This study examined some personality characteristics and demographic variables of frequent video game users. A survey of video-game-playing attitudes, personality characteristics, and entertainment choices of high school teenagers was made. Frequent video-game players were young, male, and liked competitive activities, such as playing sports. They were bright and liked challenges and science fiction movies. Infrequent players tended to be older, female, not as bright and to like noncompetitive activities. These infrequent players did not like video games, were anxious about computers, and did not read very many books.

CONTROLLING THE AVAILABILITY TO YOUNG PERSONS OF  
AMUSEMENT-WITH-PRIZES MACHINES

David Miers

Considerable concern has been expressed in the past 2-3 years about the involvement of young persons in gaming by means of machine, in particular fruit machines. The Amusement Arcade Action Group was formed in 1982 to campaign for an increase in the powers possessed by local authorities to control, inter alia, the location of arcades (and of other points of access to machines), the number of machines sited in them and their availability to young people. The machines to which it is alleged that some young people become "addicted" are those falling within the Gaming Act 1968, section 34, and which offer monetary prizes to a maximum of £1.50 and non-monetary prizes to a maximum value of £3.00. The legal picture is complicated by the fact that s.34 covers other kinds of amusement with prizes (AWP) machines, while the skills that children learn may be acquired on a variety of machines which are not controlled by law at all. This comment briefly describes the current legal regime regulating the premises on which fruit machines may be found, notes the history of concern about juvenile participation in machine gaming and identifies possible methods by which such participation could be inhibited.[1]

The Current Legal Regime

So far as the installation of fruit machines on commercial premises is concerned [1], three classes of premises may be identified within the legislation which, though not specifically distinguished there for these purposes, may nevertheless be differentiated in terms firstly of any requirement of prior approval by a statutory authority and secondly of the conditions under which such approval may be granted, renewed or cancelled.

(a) The "travelling showmen's pleasure fair"[2]

The current law preserves the "unique dispensation" granted to travelling funfairs in the Setting and Gaming act 1960[3]. Provided that the funfair is held on premises which have not been so used for more than 27 days within the previous year, and that the opportunity to win prizes at amusements (whether by machine or otherwise) is not "the only, or the only substantial, inducement to persons to attend the fair"[4], then no prior approval is required should the proprietors wish to offer their customers the opportunity to take part in gaming by means of machines to which Part III of the Gaming Act applies (that is, machines for gaming only which are designed for winning cash prizes or tokens purely on the basis of chance, such as fruit machines, or machines for gaming and amusement which are designed for playing games of chance and skill combined for cash or tokens such as mechanical or electronic car - or horse-races),

(b) Premises on which machines are "incidental"

There are two groups of premises on which machines are "no more than incidental features", and in respect of both of which a local authority enjoys the same powers. The first embraces a variety of

premises which the 1978 Royal Commission called collectively "amusement places", being premises used wholly or mainly for providing amusement [5]. Where such premises constitute "pleasure fairs "[6] and consist wholly or mainly of amusements provided otherwise than by means of Part III machines, that is, the amusements are provided by machines which offer minimal prizes or none at all, by games of skill such as shooting galleries, darts or coconut shies, by group games such as prize bingo, or by a combination of these, the proprietor requires a permit whose grant lies in the discretion of the local authority [7]. This requirement applies to funfairs, seaside piers and prize bingo parlours, and as Eddy and Loewe comment:

"These 'amusements' are, commercially and socially, of considerable importance; more so, perhaps, than what has been described as the 'hard gaming' of the casino type, though they attract less public attention. Yet nearly every amusement part or hall, funfair or sideshow throughout the country owes its lawful existence to a permit for 'amusement with prizes'." [8]

The second are those premises on which the amusements, be they Part III machines used for gaming such as fruit machines or not, are no more than an incidental feature, as for example in cafes, take-aways, railway station buffets and pubs. The installation of any of these machines likewise requires a permit which, in the case of public houses in England and Wales lies in the discretion of the licensing justices and in Scotland of the licensing board, and in the case of all other premises, the local authority [9]. It is with the powers to control this second group (although they apply equally to the first) with which AAAG and others have been concerned. In determining whether to grant a permit, a local authority is governed by Schedule 9 of the Gaming Act 1968, which gives quite extensive powers either to refuse an application or to attach a condition to a permit limiting the number of machines. By paragraph 3 of Schedule 9 the appropriate authority may pass any of the following resolutions fettering its own discretion:

- "(a) not to grant any permits in respect of a specified class of premises;
- (b) neither to grant nor renew any permits for a specified class of premises;
- (c) when granting or renewing a permit for any premises, or for a particular class of premises, to impose a condition limiting the number of Part III machines which may be used under the permit." [10]

It is under (c) that in 1983 Birmingham City Council reportedly passed a resolution limiting to two the number of fruit machines it would allow in cafes and other premises used by children. The reason given was that the Committee was concerned by the increased number of applications to license large numbers of machines in cafes, although, according to the figures given, the immediate impact of this resolution may be a small increase in the number of machines, at least on existing premises, as proprietors aim for the maximum. [11]

A second significant source of control is provided by paragraph

8(2) of Schedule 3. This provides firstly that in the absence of any resolutions fettering its own discretion made under paragraph 3, which it is the duty of the authority to apply, the grant or renewal or a permit shall "be at the discretion of the appropriate authority", and secondly that in exercising that discretion,

"The appropriate authority may refuse to grant or renew any such permit on the grounds that, by reason of the purposes for which or the persons by whom, or any circumstances in which, the premises are or are to be used, it is undesirable that machines to which Part III of this Act applies should be used for providing amusements on those premises."

By invoking this provision, a local authority could refuse to grant or to renew permits for fruit machines in cafes, fish and chip shops, motorway service areas, railway station buffets and the like, if it considered it undesirable that children could, would or did frequent such premises for the purpose only, or substantially, of gaming by machine. What an authority could not do, under either this or paragraph 3, is to impose a duty on the proprietors of such premises to exclude persons under, say 16, from using the machines (were this in any event practicable) or to fetter its own discretion in such cases. Nevertheless, the powers conferred on the appropriate authority by these paragraphs have hitherto been regarded by interested groups as generally adequate, and they clearly give scope for some action to control the quantities and location of fruit machines available to school children.

(c) Premises which consist "wholly or mainly" of AWP machines

An "amusement place" which consists wholly or mainly of amusements provided by Part III machines, typically an amusement arcade, also requires a local authority permit but, and herein lies a crucial point so far as those who wish to curb the impact of gaming by machine on children are concerned, the factors which the local authority may take into account when considering whether to renew (and to a lesser extent, to grant) a permit for such premises are significantly less extensive than those applicable in the case of premises whose amusements do not consist wholly or mainly of Part III machines[12], described in paragraph (b) above.

Paragraphs 3 and 8(2) are specifically excluded from the appropriate authority when it is considering permits for premises on which the amusements consist wholly or mainly of Part III machines, but the authority is not without powers, at least with regard to the initial grant of a permit. In this instance, paragraph 8(1)(a) provides that "the grant of a permit shall be at the discretion of the appropriate authority" which clearly allows the authority to refuse an application to open an amusement arcade near a school or other place frequented by children; but this by no means allows, as some have recommended ought to be the law, that an authority may impose a duty on proprietors of amusement arcades to exclude a particular age group altogether from the premises (again, if this were practicable).

The grounds on which the authority may refuse to renew a permit are perhaps the major point of contention, given their restricted nature. This decision may be taken only if reasonable facilities

for inspection have been refused to authorised persons, or by reason of the condition or manner in which Part III machines have been used on the premises or other amusements have been provided or conducted. If it can be established that the proprietors have skimmed profits from the machines, or rigged them to provide a lower rate of return, the authority may refuse to renew the permit, but this cannot be done "on more general grounds touching the purpose or circumstances of their use or what types of people use" the premises.[13] If male or female prostitutes solicit on such premises, offences under other legislation are committed, but this is not a sufficient ground for refusing to renew a permit; neither is the fact that the arcade is habitually frequented by 13 year olds, which would on the other hand be grounds for refusing to renew a permit for a cafe or fish and chip shop.

The reasons for the differentiation between arcades and other premises on which fruit machines may be installed are firstly that in the case of the latter, the machines are intended to be incidental to the purpose of the premises; this is clearly so in the case of cafes and other places of refreshment, but is also true of other "amusement places" where the amusement is wholly or mainly supplied by means other than Part III machines used for gaming. The object of giving the appropriate authority fairly wide powers, including that of fettering its own discretion, was to ensure that the presence of the machine on the premises remained incidental to their purposes. [14] The second reason, which is used to justify the narrower ground on which the authority may refuse to renew a permit was explained by the 1978 Royal Commission in these terms:

"The restriction was deliberate, it being thought unjust that a person whose whole livelihood might depend on his business should be put in danger of losing it through no deliberate fault of his own but purely because of the circumstances over which he might have had no effective control. For much the same reasons the local authorities were denied the right, when granting a permit or subsequently renewing it, to limit the number of machines on the premises." [15]

Against these considerations must be weighed the possible or actual detriment to the 12-17 age group (or indeed to any other individuals who may be induced to high levels of consumption) resulting from the easy availability of fruit machines. In 1982-83 there were 119,400 Part III machines used for gaming distributed among cafes, public houses, arcades and pleasure fairs[16]. There is no clear statistical information as to how these machines are distributed; but in Birmingham reportedly, in addition to the figures given earlier, 818 machines were in 1983 distributed among 26 arcades - over 30 in each set of premises.

## 2. A History of Concern

Since the early 1900's children's charities, church organisations and others have questioned the desirability of the impact of gaming by machine on children's behaviour and on their attitudes to work and leisure.[17] The 1932-33 Royal Commission on Lotteries and Betting had noted the popularity of fruit machines with children but had concluded that it would be impossible to prevent their involvement with them[18]; however, the disclosure in 1939 of

figures showing high levels of prosecution for machines on premises to which children had ready access increased the parliamentary pressure for legislative action.[19] The war pre-empted any such action, and the matter was taken up again by the 1949-51 Royal Commission on Betting, Lotteries and Gaming. In its view the relationship (if any) between gambling by means of fruit machines and delinquency stemmed not from any dangers inherent in the activity itself but rather from those potentially undesirable influences which were associated with the premises on which such machines were to be found.[20] This view has strikingly clear echoes in the evidence presented to the 1978 Royal Commission on Gambling:

"The chief complaint levelled against [amusement arcades], and more especially against arcades in the larger cities, is that they tend to become resorts of prostitutes, of adolescents who are liable to be picked up for immoral purposes, and of truanting children;"[21]

and the conclusion reached by the 1945-51 Royal Commission was that such influences would be reproduced in any place offering "light, warmth and noise"[22] to the bored or disaffected.

The concern expressed during 1983 likewise observed that arcades are attractive because they present "a warm convivial atmosphere away from the streets"[23] (a description which many might feel does not adequately capture the ambience of a city centre amusement arcade), but made a qualitatively different complaint about them; namely that the danger to the 12-17 age group does stem directly from the activity of gaming by machine itself, and not just indirectly from that which is associated with them. This represents a significant change. Nevertheless, the Home Office persists in the view taken in Cornish's excellent 1978 study, that those who have criticised the relative lack of controls over amusement arcades have "been unable to provide any evidence that arcades or leisure centres constitute any material danger to their customers so far as the primary service they offer is concerned." [24] This is clearly a controversial matter, but without meaning to belittle the difficulties that those "addicted" have experienced, we may also remark on the persistence of the images of waste and personal abasement that have contributed to the various moral panics that have been associated with machines. The remarks of the National Anti-Gambling league in 1938 are instructive in this respect:

"There are fashions in Gambling as in clothes and food and social habits. The automatic machine as a medium for gambling is the fashion, if not the passion, of the moment. To some extent, more or less, it has always been with us, but of late it has assumed the proportions of a craze, which calls particularly for the serious attention of all interested in the welfare of youth. It is popularising gambling among the young. It brings facilities for gambling to their doors in a seemingly easy and alluring fashion. As the Royal Commission on Lotteries and Betting (1933) put it - "It serves as an introduction to the gambling habit, and in some cases leads to petty theft."

The Hackney and Stoke Newington Advisory Committee for Juvenile Employment, in their Report for 1987, say "Boys and girls waste their pocket money on these machines. They acquire the gambling instinct and when all their money is gone resort to petty theft." [25]

### 3. Proposals for Reform

There are two main ways in which levels of participation in gaming by machine by children (or other user groups) could be inhibited: controls aimed at the machine and/or controls aimed at the premises on which they are situated. Both raise difficult issues of law and policy.

#### (a) Controlling the Machine

Research in behavioural psychology unambiguously shows that the structural characteristics of gaming machines conduce to high levels of consumption. [26] These characteristics are primarily their rapid event frequency and the random schedule of reinforcement. It is this latter characteristic that has been singled out as the most conspicuous and powerful element in the circumstances which generate and maintain gambling behaviour. [27]

"Since the reward in fruit machines is unpredictable in its occurrence and is given intermittently, this process of learning is enhanced, especially as the intervals between rewards are not too prolonged and the total rewards over a given period remain constant." [28]

In addition, the presence of "hold", "nudge" and "gamble" features on most machines allows "some scope for beliefs about activeness or participation and exercise of personal skills" [29], which further conduces to participation. This illusion of control, "the expectancy of a personal success probability inappropriately higher than the objective probability would warrant" [30], may of course be deliberately manipulated so as to mislead the punter, but even in the absence of this, both anecdotal and experimental research indicates that individuals who are encouraged to believe that they may personally exercise what appears to be skill over the outcome of what is a random event, will consistently overestimate their chances of winning.

These findings have significance for the formulation of legal policy on gaming machines since they suggest that the appropriate manipulation of their structural characteristics would result in lower levels of consumption. However, they face some considerable difficulties both of a legal nature and deriving from other policy considerations. To reduce the effect on the player of the characteristic of rapid event frequency it would not be difficult to incorporate electrically-operated inhibitors which delay the speed at which each game may be played, for example by lengthening the time it takes to play each game or the time interval between each game. Such manipulation would, however, alter the essential nature of gaming by machine, and as it is also a matter of policy that involvement in particular gambling outlets should be regulated with minimum disruption to their essential nature, this option may not be especially attractive. [31] Nevertheless, any preference for

maintaining the essential nature of the game is an assertion of value held by its author, against which the value of reducing participation by particular age groups needs to be balanced.

Other considerations apply to attempts to manipulate the schedule of reinforcement provided by the machine. Manipulation of such of its aspects as the number and variety of symbols on each wheel and the number of winning combinations will result in different payout ratios and in theory, variations in levels of consumption. One of the major principles adopted by the 1978 Royal Commission was that "those who gambled should have the right to know what is or may be going to happen to their money"[32], but it equally recognised that the provision of information about payout ratios is, given the complexity of modern machines, not especially meaningful and may, because it will be open to misunderstandings, actually stimulate some to play. A further limitation is that players generally are not so much interested in payout ratios expressed in percentage terms of use as the prize structure for each turn.[33]

Nor can manipulation of the machine's structural characteristics overcome the individual's own misconceptions about the probability of winning. What is distinctive about the reinforcement schedule of a gaming machine is that it is entirely random; there is a constant probability of winning on each turn. It is clear from the behaviour of many who use machines however, that they treat the schedule as though the probability of a payoff increases with each unsuccessful turn.[34] Such guesswork about the probability of a payoff is enhanced by the design features identified above. While it is true that some do offer an opportunity for the exercise of skill, their effect is to increase the number of possible outcomes and thus make statements about payout ratios even more uncertain.

Any attempt to regulate these design features poses a further difficulty, namely that of defining for legal purposes what is to be controlled. The Gaming Act provides that in respect of "any one game", no player shall be entitled to receive "any article, benefit or advantage" other than the money prize (or an equivalent) delivered by the machine.[35] This provision was in fact intended to restrict the incorporation of such features as hold and nudge buttons, but because of the absence of certain critical definitions in the Act (in particular there is no definition of a "game"), the lawfulness of such features remains indeterminate. In response to representations from BACTA the Gaming Board has approved these and some other features, but as the Home Office appears unwilling to add to an already complex area of law, this uncertainty will persist.[36]

#### (b) Controlling the Premises

A number of proposals were made to the 1978 Royal Commission to increase the powers of local authority over amusement arcades, though by no means all of these were endorsed by it.[37] A substantial proposal was that the Gaming Act should be amended so as to give authorities the same powers to pass resolutions in the case of applications for the grant or renewal of permits for premises on which the amusements comprise wholly or mainly Part III machines used for gaming, as they currently have over premises on which the amusements are not of this kind. The appropriate authority would thus be able to resolve neither to grant nor to renew permits in respect of specific classes of premises, and to

impose conditions limiting the number of such machines on those premises. The Commission felt that this was heavy-handed, and that authorities ought to consider applications on their merits: juveniles are not the only user population of amusement arcades and, the Commission argued, the considerations which prompted the enactment of paragraph 3 of Schedule 9 for premises such as cafes, pubs and the like were still cogent.

On the other hand, it endorsed proposals to give authorities powers to attach conditions when granting the permit, regarding advertising, window displays, illumination and age limits. The object of regulating the first two matters would be to reduce both the visibility and the attractiveness of arcades; of the third by increasing interior illumination both to "supervise customers and deter pickpockets and others engaged in criminal or anti-social activities"[38] and, because subdued lighting is a characteristic associated with a gambling ambience, to reduce the effect of this environmental determinant to participation; and of the fourth, simply to restrict the opportunities for recruitment to, and continued participation in, gaming by machine by young people. The Commission recognised the difficulty of enforcing age limits on premises which typically have a fluctuating clientele, but acknowledged that proprietors had genuinely attempted to exclude those under 18 from some city centre arcades; in any event, the recommendation was that

"the power should be used only when the location of the premises makes it necessary and not express a local view that such entertainments are unsuitable generally for young people."[39]

In addition, it was recommended that breach of these conditions would constitute grounds for non-renewal and that in so far as they constituted criminal offences, a magistrates' court should have power to cancel the permit.

If these recommendations were implemented a significant proportion of the proposals made by groups like Gamblers Anonymous, the National Council on Gambling and the AAAG would be met. When dealing with an application for a permit for an amusement arcade an authority is already empowered to consider the age range of those likely to frequent it, but it would then also be able to attach a condition requiring the proprietor to exclude those who are, or appear to him to be, under a specified age (and to effect other changes in the arcade's ambience, such as increasing the interior illumination or minimising advertising of the facilities on the premises), breach of which would entitle the authority to refuse to renew the permit after its normal three year life. What these recommendations would not allow is the authority to exercise any control over the number of machines on the premises, or over the hours of opening. Both of these matters may be the subject of undertakings given by the proprietors to the authority when applying for the permit in the first instance; but these afford no grounds for non-renewal in the event of non-compliance. The only local authority control which may exist over these matters lies in the area of planning law: here an upper limit may be fixed when planning permission is sought, but this is determined on criteria which are quite different from those which these interest groups might necessarily think appropriate in the prevention of machine "addiction" among children.

### Postscript

It was the 1945-51 Royal Commission that first explicitly recognised the structural characteristics of gaming by machine that make it such an attractive activity, and its judgment was that purely chance based machines should be entirely unlawful.[40] It is clearly too late to realise that position, but the recurrence of concern about the impact of gaming by machine on children should encourage reconsideration of Rothschild's perceptive analysis of this gambling medium. The unsuccessful Amusement Machines Bill 1983 was a clumsy attempt to exert greater control over machines, but is indicative of this concern. However, legal control, to be effective, must at a minimum be based on reasonably clear empirical evidence as to the scale and determinants of the problem to be solved. Despite the attention given by pressure groups to children "addicted" to gaming by machine, the current quality of evidence is of a low level[41] and, even when it has been improved there are, as indicated above, further contentious issues of policy requiring resolution before further legal controls could be introduced.

### FOOTNOTES

1. For the position concerning machines used for the purpose of fundraising for clubs, charities and the like see s.33; and more generally J Finney, Gaming, Lotteries, Fundraising and the Law (1982)
2. Gaming Act 1968, s.34(1) (d).
3. See Report of the Royal Commission on Gambling (hereafter Rothschild). (1978, Cmnd. 7200), paras. 23.16-23.17.
4. Gaming Act 1968, s.34(5) and s.52(1).
5. Rothschild, para.23.18
6. A "pleasure fair" is not defined in the legislation, but was held by the House of Lords to mean premises used mainly or exclusively for the provision of amusement with prizes; R v Harrod, ex parte Leeds City Council [1976] 3 W.L.R. 736.
7. Gaming Act 1968, s.34(1) (c).
8. J Eddy and L Loewe, The Gaming Act 1968 (1969), p.98.
9. Gaming Act 1968, s.34(1) (1) and Schedule 9 para.1.
10. Similar resolutions to those specified in subparagraphs (a) and (b) may be passed by local authorities for the purpose of deciding applications for permits for amusements with prizes under s.16 of the Lotteries and Amusements Act 1967; and the same restrictions described below in the text apply to premises "used or to be used wholly or mainly for the purposes of a pleasure fair consisting wholly or mainly of amusements" (e.g. a funfair like Battersea Park), Schedule 3, para.3.
11. The Times, 25 October 1983. 274 cafes and 117 fish and chip shops had 420 and 155 machines respectively installed on their premises; clearly less than the new maximum figure would allow. The City of Cardiff currently has

applications for permits against a resolution limiting fruit machines in cafes and restaurants to 1 per set of premises.

12. Gaming Act 1968, s.34(1)(a) and Schedule 9, paragraphs 4 and 8(1).
13. Rothschild, para.23.22.
14. Ibid., para.23.43.
15. Ibid., para.23.22.
16. Report of the Gaming Board for Great Britain 1983 (1984, H.C. 496) para.70.
17. Automatic machines designed for playing games of skill, of chance, or of skill and chance combined, emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century as part of the more widespread manufacture and distribution of automatic weighing and vending machines, and of amusement machines which for a 1/2d would operate some mechanism such as a steam engine, or depict the enactment of a hanging or other tableaux. It was from models such as these that manufacturers developed machines which offered other inducements, typically the chance of winning a cigar or some sweets if a metal ball projected by a spring lever fell into an appropriate cup or other receptacle. The intention of the fruit machine is usually attributed to an American, Charles Fey, in 1895. And see Report from the Joint Select Committee on Lotteries and Indecent Advertisements (H.C. 275; 1908).
18. Report, Cmd. 4341 (1933), paras.99, 102(vi), 181-184, 544 and 546-549.
19. H C Debs., vol.343, cols.1127-28 (9 February 1939). See also H C Debs., vol.344, col.2340 (9 March 1939, oral answers) and col.2516 (10 March 1939), and vol.346, col.2049 (4 May 1939, oral answers). Concern was also expressed on behalf of the proprietors of those premises on which machines were installed, that because the law was obscure they had difficulty in determining whether their machines were lawful and in predicting the enforcement practices of the police: H C Debs., vol.304, cols.971-73, 1016 (16 July 1935, debate) and vol.342, col.2218 (15 December 1938).
20. Report, Cmd. 8190 (1952), paras.423-434. The Royal Commission's handling of this issue indicates much greater sensitivity and realism than is to be found in its predecessor of 1933. Faced with claims from the Churches' Council of Gambling on one hand that there was "no doubt" that machines encourage "gambling fever among the young" and from the Amusement Caterers' Association on the other that machines were an "inexpensive and popular form of wholesome [sic] entertainment that is perfectly innocuous", the Report stressed that the attraction was not a simple one but involved an array of factors such as the lack of local recreational facilities and the social and economic characteristics of the users. The Commission's recommendation that purely chance based machines should be unlawful was not, however, acted upon, despite further

requests for legislative action; H C Debs., vol.467, cols.1528-1529 (21 July 1949, oral answers).

21. Rothschild, para.23.20.
22. Op. cit., para.428.
23. The Times, 18 October 1983. See also The Times, 25 January 1984, 11 September 1984 and The Guardian 17 October 1984.
24. D Cornish. Gambling: A Review of the Literature (Home Office Research Study No.42, 1978; referred to as an unofficial third volume by Rothschild, para.4.1); and see H C Debs., vol.455, cols.779-785 (30 November 1983).
25. J Gulland, Gambling Machines (1938), p.1.
26. See Cornish, op. cit., chapter 18 and references there cited; and also M Dickerson. "fixed interval schedules and persistence at gambling in the UK Betting Office" (1979) 12 J. Applied Behaviour Analysis 315 and Compulsive Gamblers (1984).
27. R Hurlburt et al, "Simulated slot machine play with concurrent V.R. and R.R. schedules of reinforcement" (1980) 47 Psychological Reports 635.
28. E Moran, speaking as Chairman of the National Council on Gambling; The Times, 18 October 1983.
29. Cornish, op. cit., pp-172-73.
30. E Langer, "The Illusion of Control" (1975) 32 J. Personality and Social Psychology 311, 313; and two articles by R Ladouceur et al on the illusion of control in (1984) 117 J. Psychology, 37-46, 47-52 (abstracts in Newsletter No.6, pp.16-17).
31. Cornish, op.cit., pp.22-224.
32. Rothschild, para.24.47.
33. On this issue of the meaning of "payout ratios" see Rothschild, paras.24.46-24.61. Section 31(7) of the Gaming Act permits Regulations to be made prescribing "the percentage or minimum percentage of the aggregate value of the charges for play inserted in the machine which the machine is designed to pay out", but none have been made. However, as with the maximum prize, the Board currently has an agreement with BACTA that jackpot machines should have a return of 71%: Rothschild, paras.23.11 and 24.17. Unlike section 31 (jackpot) machines, there is no statutory authority for a condition of this kind.
34. This is an example of the "negative recency" effect; also known as the "gambler's fallacy".
35. Section 31(4), applying to jackpot machines. One of the consequences of this provision is that in law club proprietors are not permitted to make up deficits in jackpots

delivered by the machine where, following a sequence of high payouts, the payout tubes have been emptied and the payout falls short. By agreement, Gaming Board Inspectors will take no action if the proprietors do make up the deficit from elsewhere in the club, provided the machine is then taken out of use, immediately replenished or repaired. See Report of the Gaming Board for Great Britain 1979, (1980, HC.561) paras.85-87. Section 34(3) is a provision similar to section 31(4) (supra, n33) applying to £3 maximum machines, but in this case there are maximum prizes specified by Regulation: Gaming Act (Variation of Monetary Limits) Order 1983, SI 1983, No.1750.

36. The 1978 Royal Commission acknowledged that this area is both technically and legally complex, and that the Gaming Board's agreement with BACTA "represents a sensible and moderate interpretation of the intentions of the law", but recommended that efforts should be made to place these, and other agreements concerning prizes and payout, on a statutory footing; Rothschild, paras.24.40 and 24.54.
37. These are set out and discussed in Rothschild, paras.23.23-23.35.
38. Ibid., para.23.32.
39. Id. Rule 1 of the BACTA "Code of Good Practice for Amusement Centres" (1983) provides: "Every effort will be made to refuse permission to persons under the age of 16 except children under the direct care and control of a parent or guardian".
40. Op. cit., para.434.
41. But see Huff and Collinson, this issue, and G Anderson and R Brown, "Real and laboratory gambling, sensation seeking and arousal" (1984) 75 British J. of Psychology 401-410.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND FRUIT MACHINES

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The role the popular press plays in the spread of moral panics is well documented. Occasionally, the issues paraded in this way gain the attention of people who are able to influence legislation. A recent case is that of the 'Perils of Gaming Machines', as one popular newspaper chose to report it. Arguments raised by the press were echoed in the House of Lords as Lord Campbell of Alloway presented the Amusement Machine Bill to the House. His concern was two-fold. First, that people under 16 were becoming corrupted by amusement machines - they "stand like Zombies before these new found gods" - and consequently were being tempted towards crime such as petty theft and casual sex in order to feed their subsequent addiction. Secondly, the granting of planning permission for new arcades is detrimental to the community. According to Lord Campbell such planning permission was against strong local opposition. Lord Campbell's proposed bill required government to take steps to deny those under 16 access to gaming machines.

Arguments put forward in support of the bill tended to dwell on the physical location of the gaming machines - primarily the arcades. It was argued that these places become the resort of prostitutes and 'undesirable types', adolescents liable to be picked up for immoral purposes and truancing schoolchildren. Other arguments stressed the hypnotic effect of amusement machines and the enormous amounts of money spent by young people with little return. There was general agreement concerning the 'addictive' quality of machines and the likelihood of children becoming compulsive gamblers. Baroness Ewart-Biggs also suggested that the arcades were spreading with unemployment. The bill was eventually passed to the House of Commons although the government's position so far has remained evasive; it does not consider that there is firm evidence to establish arcades as harmful to young people.

An independent study conducted on behalf of the Churches Council on Gambling in 1974 looked at the social effects of arcades and found no evidence to suggest that the availability of arcade facilities was linked to juvenile crime and delinquency. Indeed, a Home Office report compiled by CB Cornish (1978) states that only in the minimum of cases does fruit machine playing appear to be excessive. However, that same report goes on to stress that the major part of research has been concerned with the location of fruit machines rather than the effects of the activity on the player. This bias was borne out by the attitude of the House of Lords.

We felt that more research was needed on this subject, as often in the development of a moral panic the group under scrutiny is rarely given an opportunity to voice its opinion. Our research, then, was conducted exclusively with young people. We had four general aims. First, to gain an insight into the extent to which fruit machine playing is a part of the leisure activities of young people.

Secondly, to look at possible differences between those young people who play and those who do not. Thirdly, to assess the effects of variables such as age, sex, and income on frequency of play. Finally, to look at the actual dynamics of fruit machine playing. The size of our sample was 451 and consisted of children aged between 14-18, drawn from two comprehensive schools in Birmingham. Our data was elicited through a questionnaire of the fixed choice type using a sample frequency index of; never, rarely (e.g. on holiday), occasionally (e.g. once a fortnight) or often (weekly or more).

Of course we were aware of the methodological problems involved in our study, the greatest being the reliability of our data, bearing in mind that our respondents were children and consequently open to ridicule from peers and so on. However, our fears were allayed by the low instance of "copying" among groups, plus the formal way in which the questionnaire was distributed and the anonymity of each reply. Many of the answers concerning status, income and level of unemployment were on a par with national trends. Overall we are satisfied that our data is reasonably reliable and a valid representation of fruit machine playing amongst young people. It

From the data collected it emerged that fruit machine playing is a popular activity; 17% of the sample reportedly played, although the frequency of play varied considerably. Half (57%) of players played rarely and, of those, 42% reported that they play the machines as a vocational activity; for example, using arcades in holiday resorts. Of the remainder, only 9% reported playing often and 18% played occasionally. Our results show that the younger people are more likely to play fruit machines; that is 14 and 15 year olds. Interestingly, there appears to be a decline in the level of participation as children get older. We found that more males play than females, the highest levels of participation occurring in the income range of £1-4 and the lowest in the under £1 and over £5 ranges (income being determined by pocket money, part-time jobs, paper-rounds etc.). Those that do play and receive an income exceeding £5 are inclined to play on a more regular basis. It would appear that once a person has started playing fruit machines the level of income determines the frequency of future play. There was little difference between players and non-players in relation to other variables such as attitudes towards school, although those who play fruit machines had a slightly higher level of participation in other leisure activities. This indicates that the playing of fruit machines fits into a range of other leisure pursuits rather than leading to their exclusion.

On the whole, no relationship between social class and participation was evident. However, a relationship between parental gambling and the level of participation amongst the children emerged. Children who play machines are more likely to have people in the family who indulge in the harder forms of gambling such as gaming and betting on horses. Arcades were the most popular choice of location for machine playing, followed by fish and chip shops and then pubs, the former owing to the large number of vocational players, However, the more frequently a young person plays, the more likely they are to play in places other than arcades.

An interesting aspect of the data was the way in which young people control their expenditure. Of all players, 62% were aware of the amount of money they spent on machines, the proportion of those aware of their expenditure increased with the frequency of play. Our findings cast doubt on allegations that children spend vast amounts of money on machines. Of all players, 77% put less than £1 in the machines at any one time and none exceeded £5, with only 4% spending £3-5. It should be noted that of those that played often a large proportion fell within the £1-3 level of input as did those who played occasionally. It would be accurate to say that those who play frequently have a tendency toward higher input at any one time. Overall, of all players a majority (78%) restrict input to under £1, which implies that rather than being hypnotized into spending vast amounts of money the players are quite rational and astute in their play. Our data indicates that the amount a person wins and the money they have available are the most important determinants of continued play.

In general the young people tended to play for positive reasons, for example, to win money, for enjoyment and so on, rather than because they are bored. This leads us to question assumptions made by members of the House of Lords that people play machines as an alternative to an unpopular activity e.g. going, to school, rather than as an enjoyable activity compatible with other leisure activities or pastimes. Indeed, of those who played often, none played because of dissatisfaction with an aspect of their daily lives. Half of the players found the machines complicated but the majority of the players did not believe that skill was necessary in operating machines or to win, perhaps indicating a belief in luck as a determinant of winning, thereby ensuring continued play to a certain extent.

We did not detect any stigma associated with the subject of gambling; over half the respondents perceived fruit machine playing as a form of gambling, there was no attempt to rationalize or legitimate the activity. However, our research showed that among young people the more frequently a person plays the less likely are they to play alone. Labelling the activity as deviant is even more inappropriate when we consider that the majority of parents were fully aware of their children's participation.

For the vast majority of young people the actual practice of playing fruit machines is an enjoyable activity which they conduct in moderation. Our research shows that they are careful with their money and do not go into debt, nor do they lose control or become mesmerized by the machines. Although the majority of young people do play machines at some time it is by no means a major leisure activity. It seems to be primarily a holiday pursuit. For a very small minority it may be a problem. Their Lordships, in attempting to enforce legislation on something which is essentially a harmless activity, are pre-occupied by the location of fruit machines in the misconception that by restricting access to arcades they will help those who are at risk from playing fruit machines. Our data indicates that those players do not use the arcades to any great extent and that by imposing legislation on arcades they will be curtailing the enjoyment of many for the sake of a few who cannot be helped by such legislation.

# THE JOURNAL OF GAMBLING BEHAVIOR

Sponsored by The National Council on Compulsive Gambling

Editor: Henry R. Lesieur, Ph.D.

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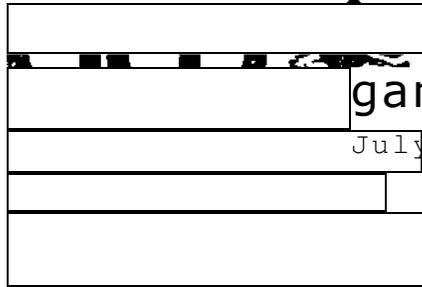
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*Winter 1984-85 25*



## gambling in the 80's-

July 10-12, 1985.

School of Humanities.  
Griffith University,  
Nathan. Qld. 4111

Jan McMillen  
Telephone: (07) 275 7463  
or 275 7156

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The inaugural NAGS conference is being organized by a committee drawn from Griffith University and key representatives in each state. It will be held at Griffith University from Wednesday 10 July to Friday 12 July, 1985. Further details and conference registration forms will be forwarded in March.

The conference will be organized into symposia, papers and panel discussions. Complementary papers will be grouped by the conveners into various sessions which address specific themes and issues.

Papers are invited on any aspect of gambling. Some suggestions include:

- gambling research - problems and strategies
- gambling and the community
- gambling and the individual
- professional gamblers
- gambling policies and revenues
- gambling and crime
- marketing, management and betting strategies
- gambling and the future.

To facilitate the organization of sessions, intending contributors are asked to provide a title and brief summary of their papers to the conference organizer by March 31, 1985 on the attached form.

Forward to: Conference Organizer,  
School of Humanities,  
Griffith University,  
Kessals Road,  
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or contact: Jan McMillen (07) 275 7463 or  
Jill Water (07) 275 7156