

# Atlantic City Press

REFINED, SNOBBISH, POSH

## Legal Gambling A La Puerto Rico

By FRED HAMILTON  
Press Staff Writer

Mention the phrase "legalized gambling" and most people jump to two conclusions:

1. That every gas station, restaurant, and bar will have slot machines, roulette wheels, and card games, and;
2. That in the back room of each of those establishments will lurk a coarse-looking fellow in a black suit, black shirt, white tie, wide-brimmed hat pulled down over one eye, and an ominous bulge on his chest.

### CONDITIONED RESPONSES

These responses, of course, are conditioned. They have been learned by watching one-too-many Late Show movies, and reading one-to-many pulp magazines.

Not one member of the group of local businessmen heading the drive to legalize gambling in Atlantic City believes or hopes the day will come when a slot machine is as common as a cigarette machine.

Nor would they pursue their interest in making Atlantic City a fashionable resort with the added inducement of gambling if they thought the underworld would descend en masse and take over the city.

But these two notions are the bones of contention between the group backing the movement and the voters who must ultimately approve it. And it is the solution of this problem to which the group is now directing most of its efforts.

### BIG TASK

The leader of the group, Meyer I. (Mike) Segal, former president of the Ventnor City Council and a local business executive, put it this way:

"One of our big tasks in the forthcoming months will be to show the man on the street and the woman in the house that legalized gambling in Atlantic City, will, if approved, be under the strictest possible supervision by state authorities such as an official commission, and that it will be established on a very refined basis."

He added:

"As far as organized crime is concerned, legalized gambling is just what they don't want. It would curb the amount of illegal gambling and the underworld would lose a major source of its revenue."

What Segal and other members of the group envision in Atlantic City is gambling on a limited basis, such as now exists in Puerto Rico.

They see only a few licenses being issued by a state gambling commission to only the most respectable persons in the hotel-motel-night club industry.

"We would definitely oppose legalized gambling if it meant that every restaurant would have slot machines," Segal said. "This wouldn't be desirable at all."

In Puerto Rico—now one of the world's most glamorous tourist meccas—gambling is closely controlled by the government. Stringent restrictions are placed on hours of operation, age limits, betting limits, who may hold a gambling license, and how the gaming establishment is run.



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### HAVEN'T BEEN CHEATED

People may lose money gambling in Puerto Rico. But they don't feel as if they've been cheated. They know the games are completely on the up and up and, generally, those who lose money there can afford to do so. That's the kind of tourist Puerto Rico now attracts and the entire island has benefited.

Gambling on a scale such as this is a far cry from the James Cagney syndrome that is commonly accepted as "what it would be like."

And this is precisely the kind of economic windfall that should be welcomed by concerned taxpayers who feel burdened now and can see only more of the same for the future.

The fact that Mayor Richard S. Jackson and the city commissioners endorsed the movement to legalize gambling indicates that respectable, civic-minded persons believe such a plan is feasible.

And Segal said last week he has received so many phone calls and letters supporting his efforts that he hasn't had time to list them all. At last count it was in the neighborhood of 2,000.

### NOT ALL FRIENDLY

"Oh yes," he admitted, "I've had a few unfriendly calls, too. Just the other day a woman called me and said she was against us because she was afraid her husband would spend his entire pay check on the slot machines before he got home on payday."

"Well, I told her it was that very reason that we favored gambling on a refined basis and under controlled conditions. And you know what? By the time I had finished talking to her she wished us luck."

The movement headed by Segal and the other businessmen and political figures in this area could hold limitless possibilities for Atlantic City, so long as it is closely controlled and regulated.

"Seven come eleven" can be sad many ways. To sound meaningful for Atlantic City, it will have to be pronounced with a slightly snobbish air.