

Ferdie J. Deering

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## State Churches Should Prepare For '75 Liquor, Gambling Attack

**C**HURCHES in Oklahoma should brace for a multi-pronged attack in 1975, with the state legislature as the arena. Liquor and gambling interests are devising a diversionary campaign, hoping to gain a clearer field to push for liquor by the drink and wide open gambling.

The attacks are not likely to be made upon religion in general or upon the doctrines of the churches. Instead, the attacks more likely will be aimed at "getting the churches out of politics" and against the tax-exempt status of churches.

Most denominations, traditionally, do not act in concert on political matters. But individual church members do become involved in poli-

tics, frequently reflecting religion-oriented views. Certainly, no person should be required to give up his rights and responsibilities as an American citizen simply because he chooses to belong to a religious organization.

The tax-exempt status of churches and properties they own has often been a sore point with non-church members, and with legislators looking for more money to spend, some of them may be persuaded to go along.

Church operated schools and colleges also will become targets. The public should beware of generalized statements that may be made in attacks upon them, since not all church schools are the same.

Plans also are under way to try to make the liquor by the drink proposal more palatable to voters. One idea is to present a shorter, simpler proposition than previous ones, leaving the writing of precise rules and regulations to the legislature. This would be to minimize points of attack, allowing sponsors to reply: "That will all be worked out later." There also is talk of local option, which would be another effort to sweeten the dose.

A prominent politician will be engaged to lead the liquor lobby in the legislative halls. This will be in an effort to have the legislature pass a liquor proposal to be put to public referendum in 1975. The liquor interests are assembling a power machine to try to bring in open saloons in Oklahoma.

Gambling interests, disappointed by the defeat of pari-mutuel betting in August, also are regrouping. In the bitterness of election night emotions, one spokesman said they might come back with a proposal to legalize many kinds of gambling.

The outlook for 1975 is for another showdown battle between those who are in favor of a wide open state and those who do not want to open the gates to more crime. If the developing strategy to distract church members should succeed, Oklahomans may have a lot more than inflation to worry about.

## State Churches Should Prepare for '75 Liquor, Gambling Attack

By Ferdie J. Deering

(Note: Ferdie J. Deering is vice-president and editorial director for the Farmer-Stockman agricultural magazine and editorial writer for the Daily Oklahoman. He is a longtime member of Nichols Hills Church, Oklahoma City where he is a deacon and Sunday school teacher.)

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# Society Can't Legislate Morality

Dear Sir:

I believe the article dated Oct. 30 by Ferdie J. Deering in an Oklahoma City newspaper, entitled, "State Churches Should Prepare for '75 Liquor, Gambling Attack," deserves an answer.

This answer is written from the viewpoint of one who exhausted his lust for gambling at an expense of about \$2 in an Amsterdam slot machine, and whose alcoholic consumption is usually limited to 3.2 beer and infrequent consumption of wines.

Deering again illustrates the work of religious interests to have their opinions enacted into law. While I hold gambling to be an undesirable pastime, pursued by such men of renown as General George Washington, I know of no scriptural prohibition against it, and cannot see how Deering will justify the religious lobby against it.

Indeed, the only way to remove the criminal element from gambling pursuits would be to make all gambling debts legally collectable, just as are all other contracted obligations.

While they protest liquor by the drink will cause more traffic deaths, I think it can be shown that those who carry about their bottle so they can have drinks at private clubs are more inclined to "kill" those bottles when they get low, which is frequently just enough to

bring them over the brink of intoxication.

The real solution to the problems which it is supposed would be caused by legal gambling and liquor by the drink is that individuals should be held legally responsible for whatever arises from their actions.

Deering and hislike continue to attempt to control the moral actions of other people, protesting that the standard of public morality will drop, a standard which they, of course, demand the right to interpret. Their kind has been around since before the Spanish Inquisition. In the Soviet Union, I believe these people are called Commissars. Here, they go by other names. They do their work in the name of their country, and their religion, forgetting all the time that their country's Constitution requires separation of Church and State, and that their country's Bill of Rights expressly forbids the Congress to pass laws respecting establishments of religion.

Tyrants come in many different forms: some are religious, some atheistic, some socialistic, and some imperialistic. Their common denominator is that they deny to other men the right to make their own moral, economic, and political decisions.

John R. Vernon  
City