

**Ferdie J. Deering**

FEB. 17 1976

## Liquor-by-Drink, Betting Petitions Bring Bad Problems, Side Effects

A DOUBLE-HEADED effort to turn Oklahoma into a wide-open state has been launched with petition drives to bring two controversial questions before voters again in November.

One will ask citizens to legalize sale of liquor by the drink and another proposes to legalize pari-mutuel betting on horse races. The campaigns are being organized by two separate groups, but drinking and gambling have so long been associated that public opposition may be expected to unite against them.

Oklahoma is an island of resistance to the national trend to legalize sale and use of every kind of vice and accessories. It is a sore spot to national and state interests who would like to profit from such activities. They are backing the drives.

Liquor by the drink was voted down in Oklahoma in 1972 and race track gambling was rejected separately in 1974. Perhaps sponsors figure a double-barreled attack will work.

Many respectable citizens see no harm in sociable drinking of alcoholic beverages or in risking spare cash in gambling for entertainment. This attitude disregards the tremendous cost that individuals and the public must pay for alcoholism and troubles it causes. It also overlooks the fact that gambling thrives on funds from hard-pressed families in lower economic brackets, often depriving children of necessities and leaving merchants holding unpaid bills.

Many people who drink do not gamble, and probably not all gamblers drink, but in localities where both of these vices are openly operating, they are closely associated with each other and with related vices. Doubters need only to go look for themselves.

There is no question that this nation and Oklahoma have experienced marked declines in moral standards since WWII. Many major cities have become cesspools of filth and crime, avoided by numerous citizens as they would any other sort of plague.

New York City, for example, once was a goal for ambitious businessmen, entertainment seekers, conventioners and vacationers. In recent years, a number of corporations have moved offices out of the city because executives do not want to move families there.

Only those who want pornography, nudity and profanity would consider New York for entertainment, and vacationers who want peace and quiet look elsewhere. So do conventioners. New York is a prime example of a wide open town, not to be emulated.

There are strong signs of infiltration into Oklahoma by organized crime, but so far efforts to pin down operations for prosecution have produced little. Many officials are convinced that national syndicates are standing by, ready to move in.

Legalization of open saloons and large scale gambling could provide them with opportunities they have been waiting for.

Instead of accepting proposals that would encourage further erosion of the good qualities of life here, Oklahomans—particularly church members and civic leaders—should be mounting intensive and extensive campaigns to get rid of crime, alcoholism, gambling, prostitution and other vices we already have.

### PETITIONS BEING CIRCULATED

It has come to the attention of the Board of Church and Society that petitions are being circulated to authorize a vote to legalize Liquor-By-The-Drink and Pari-Mutuel Gambling. A task group of the Board has met to consider these matters. Their statement is as follows:

"The people of the state of Oklahoma have voted in recent years to reject both Liquor-By-The-Drink and Pari-Mutuel Gambling. They have indicated that they do not want either of these matters to be part of Oklahoma. A resounding "no" to both issues has already been registered by Oklahoma citizens; therefore,

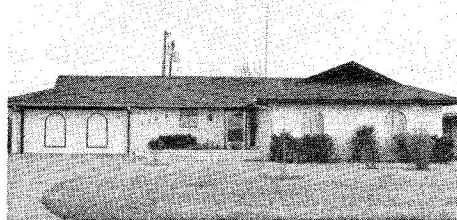
"We encourage all United Methodists to help again to defeat both proposals by refraining from signing these two petitions. There is no need to waste tax payers money on another vote so soon; and

"We are convinced that these petitions are being proposed and pushed by selfish interests who value making money over the lives of people; and

"We firmly believe that passage of either or both the Liquor-By-The-Drink and Pari-Mutuel Gambling would accelerate the already spiraling crime rate in Oklahoma."

### CITIZENSHIP SEMINAR

Several Oklahoma Conference Boards will cooperatively sponsor a seminar on Responsible Christian Citizenship, to be held at the OCU Chapel, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., on Saturday, March 6. (See Mid-February CONTACT for full details.) Reservations (enclosing the \$2.50 fee) should reach Dr. Dulaney Barrett, 2501 N. Blackwelder, O.C. 73106 by March 1.



The parsonage of St. Paul's Church, Duncan, was dedicated recently by Bishop Paul W. Milhouse, assisted by Dr. J. J. Stowe, Jr., District Superintendent, and the Rev. Terry McLaughlin, pastor. The beautiful new residence became debt-free only three years and two months after its purchase.

## Ferdie J. Deering Writes In THE DAILY OKLAHOMAN

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page 8, Tuesday, February 17, 1976  
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