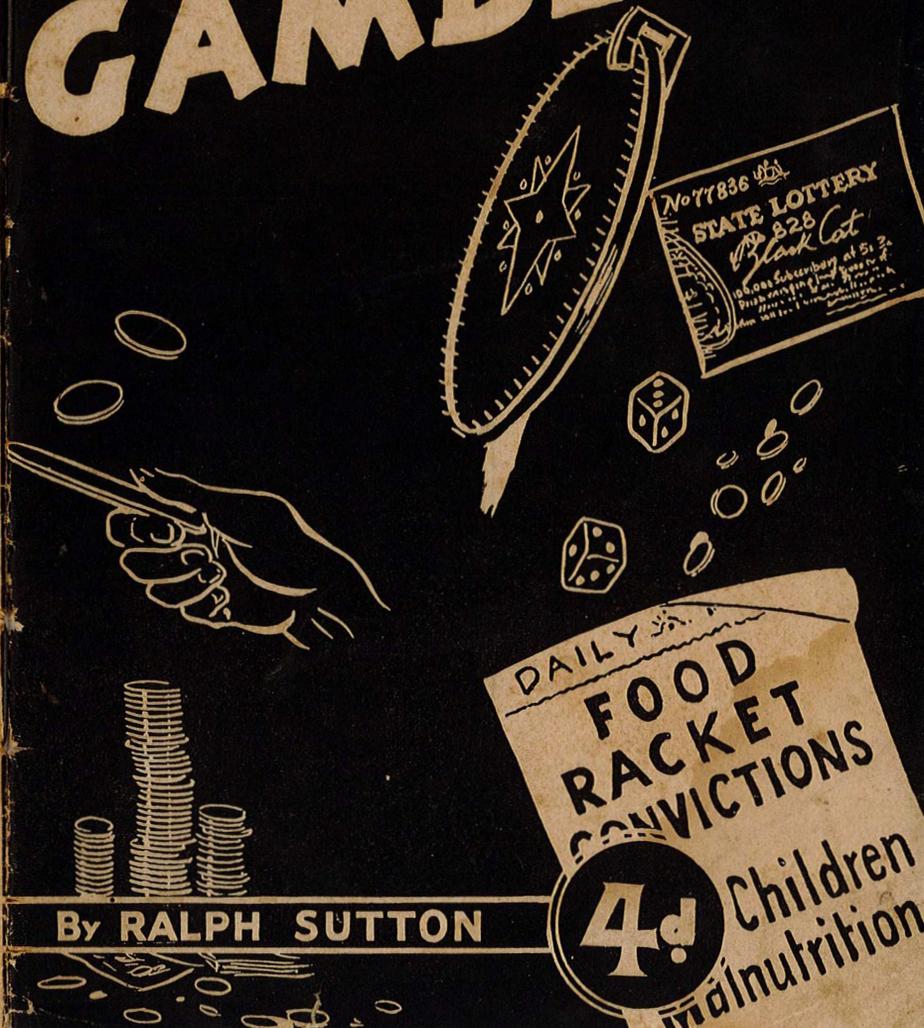


# What's wrong with a **GAMBLE?**



Epworth Press, 218 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

By **RALPH SUTTON**

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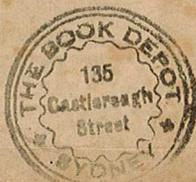
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# What's Wrong with a Gamble?

A STATEMENT OF THE MORAL AND SOCIAL  
IMPLICATIONS OF GAMBLING

Ralph Sutton

## WHAT IS GAMBLING?

"Everybody knows what gambling is!" . . . That's what you say. But I'm telling you they don't. "Oh, yes; when Mrs. Smith puts a bob on the dogs or takes a cut in a lottery ticket—that's gambling." We all know that. We all know, too, that when Jones backs a horse he's gambling, and when Mr. Y. Z. Openslather buys options in wheat, or tries to corner the sugar, he, too, is gambling.

That's all right so far. But when I tell Smith, Jones, or Openslather that they are gamblers, they generally reply: "Look who's talking! What about yourself? All life is a gamble. Are you insured?" Yes? Well, then, you're betting the company you'll live to three score and ten. You are a gambler yourself. All life is a gamble . . . a game of chance. You must take risks to achieve anything; you must gamble to succeed."

Is that so? Then why does the bookie always win? Because he works to a system by which he reduces his risks to a frazzle. Why does the insurance company never go broke, but keep growing stronger? For just the same reason: its risks are based on statistics, averages and calculations that reduce them to a minimum.

"Oh," says Openslather, "so an insurance company is a gambling concern, just like a bookie, you admit that?" No, Sir, nothing of the kind! The insurance company renders a service to the

community, the bookie renders none. There is a vast difference in principle, but the motive is much the same in our present circumstances, except with life companies where the profits are given in bonuses. Look here, let us begin at the beginning."

### ALL RISK IS NOT GAMBLE

When you get down to tin tacks **Gambling is the use of chance as a method of exchanging property.** It is wrong to call anything that contains risk a gamble. Life contains risks. We never know from one day to another whether we are going to live or die. But life is controlled by laws of nature. Obey the laws and the dangers are not great. Flout the laws and you get it in the neck. If every man in the army was not inoculated as a safety measure, the world would have been swept by a plague more devastating than a thousand-bomber raid, long before this. Knowledge of life's laws reduces the risk to a frazzle.

### SURE TIP FOR A "DEAD" CERT

If you see a sign reading "WET PAINT," you (if you are human), touch it to see if it's wet. But if it reads "LIVE WIRE, 1,000 VOLTS," you don't. Not even if I offer you a tenner for every volt. Life is full of risks, but we do not go looking for them; we rather aim to cut them out and make life as safe as possible. That is why we put traffic lights at busy crossings. Life contains risks, but life is not a property we seek to exchange by method of chance, i.e., by looking for risks as a punter goes looking for bets. No man gambles with life as with money.

### IS INSURANCE GAMBLING?

Well, what of insurance? What is the difference between me "betting" the insurance company that it won't rain on the day of the church fair and Smith betting the bookie that a certain horse will

win a race? To begin with the insurance company will only accept my business when it has made a thorough investigation of rainfall averages for the area concerned over many years, and for the month of the year involved. "Oh, yes? And the bookie will only accept my bet or name his premium (odds) after he has studied the form and performance of the horse, and compared it with that of others in the race, and topped it off with the latest from the stables—"straight from the horse's mouth"—**where's the difference?**

Here there is little or no difference in the method. Both try to cut the risk to the smallest margin possible. But there is a big difference between the reliability of the weather, fickle as it is, and the reliability of a horse. The horse might have the "flu," be held by a jockey, or doped by a trainer—or he might fall on the track or be beaten by a dark horse. I prefer to trust the average rainfall myself. The human element that controls so much of the horse is too incalculable.

### Where Do Betting and Insurance Differ?

The bookie takes bets to make profit. To do this he must work by a system that is watertight. That is why the punter's is a mug's game . . . if it was possible for the punter to win the bookie would not be in business. The insurance company takes business also to make profit. But where you bet the bookie hoping you will win and he will have to pay, you insure your life or your house hoping the company won't have to pay. The bookie gives you nothing. Insurance gives you security: whether you DRAW on that security or not, you always have it available. It is a service you BUY. The premium is not a bet, but the cost of that security.

### CO-OPERATIVE SECURITY

Here is where we see the difference between gambling and co-operative security. The motive

of the gambler is to get rich quick, get something for nothing, or have a flutter. You don't insure to get rich quick, unless you really believe you can burn your house and get away with it. Nor do you do it to have a "flutter."

The insurance company does in business just what we all try to do with life, reduce risk to a minimum. You join the scheme for the same reason. **You are not seeking to get rich quickly by some chance happening, but rather to guard against getting POOR quickly by some chance happening—the burning of your home or an attack of sickness.**

Insurance is a great scheme of co-operative security; a form of applied Christianity—"bear ye one another's burdens." It is a combination of a great number of persons to stand by the one who suffers a blow that might otherwise be crippling. The broad, strong shoulders of the many take the weight and help the smitten one through. It is a plan to **cancel the risks of life.** In life-insurance, for example, **every member or his dependents, benefits in the end.** No gamble about that!

Further, the man who does **not** insure his house or his life is the gambler—he is taking a risk which he cannot avoid, and cannot afford to meet. The man who fails to insure is just as guilty of gambling, by his negligence, as if he put his fortune on the throw of a dice or the run of a horse. Far from being a gamble, co-operative security is the opposite of gambling.

## WHY IS GAMBLING WRONG? THE ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

"So what?"

We have seen that life is not a gamble; insurance is not a gamble; the explorer planning a journey into the unknown is not gambling. Why? Because in all these the aim is to get rid of risk and to give greater and greater **security—to take no chances, but carefully to calculate**

everything. In these, too, there is service to the community.

**When you get down to tin tacks, gambling is the using of chance as a method of exchanging property.**

"Well, why is it wrong? Why is it destructive? What are the church's objections to it?"

Here they are:

### ECONOMIC OBJECTION:

#### The Road to Bedlam

A simple way to test if any action is right is to ask yourself "**What would be the result if everyone always did it,**" Is it right to punch a chap's face if you don't like the look of it? Is it right to take possession of any article you fancy? Ask yourself.

What would be the result if everyone in business always decided the price of their goods by the toss of a coin? Or by the amount they pulled out of a "lucky" envelope? What would the grocer say if you suggested playing a hand of poker to pay him nothing or double? What if the car dealer accepted a game of two-up to decide the price of the car? Would you agree to pay on the **throw of a dice?**

No, I'm not mad. I'm just asking you regarding this idea of exchanging property by method of **chance:** "What would happen if everyone **always** did it?" The answer is "**economic bedlam.**" From the business point of view gambling is economically unsound and utterly unthinkable. **We expect value for money—"fair exchange and no robbery."** To rely on chance would create a bigger mess than we are in now—and that's talking!

### FOUR SOCIAL OBJECTIONS:

#### (1) Wealth Without Work Panders to Sloth

To say it is right to gamble is saying it is right to get wealth without work. This is to encourage

sloth, and is **socially destructive**. If a man does not work he is not entitled to eat. If a man makes no contribution to the society in which he lives he is a parasite. The gambler is that. He lives on his fellows. He makes no contribution to the common pool of wealth.

Ask yourself again the simple question: "What would happen if everyone always did it?" They couldn't. If **no one** worked, not even the gambler could exist. He depends on the work of others, and on the wealth created by others.

### (2) To Take from the Many and Give to the Few is Undemocratic

Gambling is undemocratic. The ideal of a democratic state is equality of opportunity for all. The aim is to spread the opportunity for wealth and security as equally and justly as possible amongst the whole community.

Gambling is the very opposite of this aim, the denial of democracy. A lottery or sweepstakes instead of distributing the wealth amongst the many takes it from the many—(all who buy tickets), and concentrates it in the hands of the few—the lucky winners.

### Communist Gamblers Are Hypocrites

The Socialist or Communist, as well as the Democrat or Christian who gambles, is a hypocrite. Gambling is the denial of those principles common to all, the contradiction of all that they profess to stand for. It is guided by no law, it runs just by chance, it takes from the many and gives to the few without any means of determining even if the few who benefit are worthy. It is more than this, it is to acquiesce in the very system that is condemned by all. Read on and see.

### (3) Every Man for Himself is Denial of Democracy

Gambling is again undemocratic because it is the denial of the community spirit which is natural

to man and essential to any contented society. It looks on the other fellow as a thing to be exploited, if you are smart or lucky enough to do it. The basis of community life is co-operation. But the gambler is one who seeks his own welfare **alone**, and that at the expense of the community, in which he is a parasite, rendering no service, and doing no creative work.

**What is more to the point is that this hard and selfish attitude toward one's fellows is unchristian—an outrage against the principle of brotherhood—it treats men like cattle—things to be used.** The gambler doesn't care a fig for the suffering the loser goes through, or what his family might suffer. "**Every man for himself and God for us all,**" as the elephant said when he danced among the chickens. That is the gambler's spirit. It doesn't excuse it, or make it just, to say that the loser is the same. It makes it worse; it means that not one, but **two** people, or more, think and act by this pre-historic and animal motive.

### (4) Daylight Robbery Is the Same Thing

There is no difference between gambling and stealing. Just compare them. Why is it wrong to steal? Don't tell me "Because the Bible says so." That is no answer. **Why was it put in the Bible?** Simply because in man's experience it was found to be not only unjust, but intolerable, that a person should go and take anything he fancied. But why unjust? Why intolerable? Why were not commerce and trade based on this idea, and not on the idea of barter or "fair exchange and no robbery"? There must be a reason for it.

### WHY IS STEALING WRONG?

(1) **The Road to Bedlam.** If everyone always did it, just think what a mess we would be in.

Business conducted on this principle would create economic bedlam. It is utterly unsound.

(2) **It panders to sloth.** To permit stealing is to declare that it is right and just to get wealth without work, to possess something you have not earned.

(3) **It is undemocratic.** It takes from the many and gives to the few. And with no worthiness on the part of the few who receive, i.e., who do the stealing.

(4) **It denies the community spirit.** It says: "Every man for himself."

(5) **It violates our sense of justice** to think that one man can sneak in and grab what another man has toiled to make or earn. It doesn't make the action right if a thief steals from a thief something that he might own.

A glance back at the objections to gambling will reveal that they are exactly the same as those against thieving. Gambling is also an unjust means of gain, for it is taking what another man has earned. That he consents to risk it that way does not make the action right. If everyone always did it, and everyone consented to it, that would not stop the bedlam and mess it would make.

#### **IF IT'S WRONG FOR £500 IT IS WRONG FOR 6d.**

Now you don't say to your boy, "Billy, it really doesn't matter if you steal 1/- or 6d, but you must not steal the pay roll; nor must you crack the safe at the bank, that's wrong." No! If it is wrong to crack the safe, it is wrong to steal 6d. As the little boy said: "It's not the school, it's the 'principal' of the thing." So here, it is not the amount, but the **principle** involved that makes the action wrong.

#### **SPIRITUAL OBJECTION:**

The sixth and final objection to gambling is the **spiritual objection.**

#### **Creation Is Based on Laws: Gambling Denies Any Law**

God made the world to function with **reason and order.** He works the world according to definite laws, and behind it we can see a definite **plan** unfolding through all life. In gambling there is no law, no reason, no order. Everything happens by sheer fluke and chance. It is the very opposite of God's way of doing things by law and plan.

There is even more to it than that. We believe that if a man has faith in God and puts himself **entirely** in the hands of God, then God can speak and live and work **through** that man with mighty power. Again and again in human history this has been proved. "Nothing walks with **aimless feet**" when God directs our way. The man filled with the spirit of God can change the course of history and overthrow legions of evil. But if you declare that all life is based on chance, you deny this thing; you are declaring something that is contrary to the proof of history, you deny that God can or does work through man.

#### **Chance Is the Denial of God**

If life is a gamble, if everything happens by chance, then God is ruled right out of life. He is ruled right out of the beginning of the world, and right out of its end. It happened by chance, it will end or go on just by chance. That is the judgment of the gambler. **It is the denial of the spiritual basis and meaning of life.** "The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God'."

#### **We Refuse To Sell Our Principles**

That, then, is why **our** church sets itself resolutely against all forms of gambling, whether thrippenny raffles or state lotteries. We could,

no doubt, be a much wealthier church if we chose to exploit people by these sinister, selfish, undemocratic and unchristian means. The Roman Church thrives on it. But we as a church refuse to be a parasite on society, exploiting the people. We refuse to engage, be it ever so little, be it ever so profitable, **we refuse** to engage in a lust for wealth that is the denial of everything for which Christianity stands, of all that it stands for in human character and in human dealings with one another.

## THIS IS THE ACID TEST THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

If the principles of gambling are applied even in a small way, even unconsciously, the result is disastrous. It doesn't matter much whether you take a spoonful or half a spoonful of poison; it doesn't matter whether you know what it is or not, the result is just the same.

So, anything that **creates (1) Economic Instability, (2) Wealth Without Work; (3) Undemocratic Means of distributing wealth; (4) Gain only at another's loss; or (5) denies the community spirit; (6) denies the presence and purpose of God, in human life . . .** anything that contains these elements, whether **one or all**, whether in **part or whole**, whether consciously or unconsciously, contains the matter of gambling.

The collapse of our modern commercial and financial system is largely due to the heavy dose of these principles that it has mixed and swallowed. Profit in a small way and with restricted scope seemed all right. But when the field became crowded and the scope unlimited, economic instability, the pall-bearer of successive systems, arrived again. Wealth without work is pleasant to receive, but stock exchange gambling has brought misery to millions. The desire for dividends and unearned increments has oppressed thousands of poor—(not willingly, not knowingly). It is lovely to scoop the lottery,

but none who opposes exploitation of the people should support a thing that thrives on exploitation, and is contrary to every progressive ideal. Competition is healthy, but there is a point where it means your gain is only at the loss of your fellow in "opposition." It means every man for himself, and denies the community spirit; it becomes vicious and makes men hard and vicious, just like gambling—**commercial war, without principle and without quarter.**

## THE ROAD TO HAPPINESS

The tragedy of the world around us is the result of the principles of gambling applied on a large scale. Jesus warned us of these consequences. He didn't merely drop hints; he didn't just tell us what **not** to do, but what **to** do. And when he had stated what to do, He said: "**If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.**" We have not done them and we are not happy. The slow, weary task of building a new world is the slow, weary task of wiping these principles of destruction and selfishness out of our lives.

## “. . . BEGINS AT HOME”

Reform, like charity, begins at home. We have started on raffles and lucky envelopes, dogs, horses, and lotteries . . . “these things aught ye to have done, and not left the other undone”—black markets and usurers, speculations, unearned increments, the great god Dividend, and all those fallacies that enslave the bodies and strangle the souls of men. These must pass out.

## “TIME MAKES ANCIENT GOOD UNCOUTH . . .”

These, then, are the social and moral implications of gambling. It is essentially savage. Our present social order is tottering because it has absorbed so much of its elements. The consequences

of such large-scale application of the principles and spirit of gambling are unavoidable.

The things that yesterday we considered good and adequate, to-day we regard as no good and inadequate. If they persist, then tragedy overtakes us all. **This is the nature of social and moral progress:**

**New occasions teach new duties, time makes ancient good uncouth,  
We must upward still, and onward, who would keep abreast of truth.  
Lo, before us gleam her camp fires! We ourselves must pilgrims be,  
Launch our "Mayflower," and steer boldly through the desperate winter sea,  
Nor attempt the future's portal with the past's blood-rusted key.**

Epworth Press, 218 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.