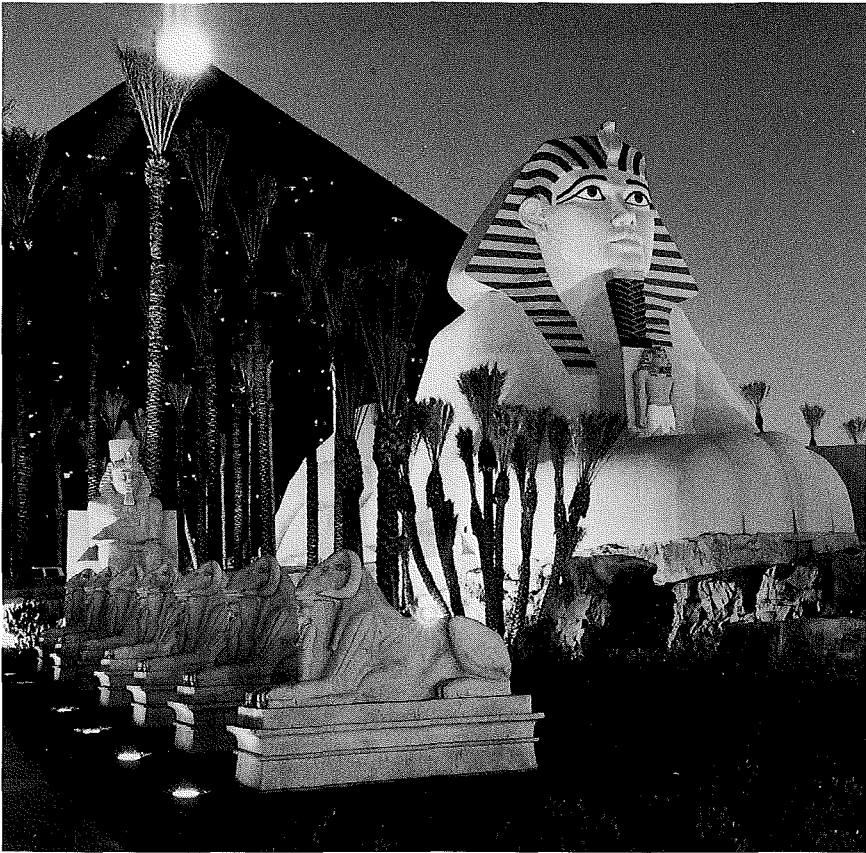


# Nevada

Historical Society Quarterly



SUMMER 1994

# NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY

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Historical Society Quarterly

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# NEVADA'S LEGALIZATION OF CASINO GAMBLING IN 1931

## Purely a Business Proposition

Eric N. Moody

Nevada's legalization of casino gambling in 1931 ranks as one of the most momentous events in the state's history. Every significant historical study of Nevada published since the 1930s and every monograph examining the development of its celebrated "gaming industry" has described and explained the so-called wide-open gambling law which laid the foundation for what became the state's dominant, trademark, economic activity.

The law's enactment has been explained in various ways: It was devised and passed by state legislators in response to public and government demands that widespread illegal gambling and the accompanying political corruption be controlled; it was enacted in order to provide state and local government with needed license tax revenues; it originated in the legislature as an economic recovery measure to help Nevada's depression-hobbled business community by luring additional visitors and money into the state. These historical accounts often carry some additional reference to Nevada's frontier roots and the fact that the state was merely legitimizing an activity that had traditionally existed within its borders, with the tacit approval of most of its inhabitants.<sup>1</sup>

The difficulty with these explanations is that they do not, singly or together, adequately tell us why Nevada adopted its nationally unique gambling law. All of them certainly need to be taken into account when explaining the 1931 statute, but the events surrounding that measure's enactment by the legislature, and the political and economic forces then at work in the state, need to be viewed from a new and different perspective, one that takes into account previously overlooked factors involved in the law's creation and that demonstrates the complexity of what has proven to be the seminal event of twentieth century Nevada's development.

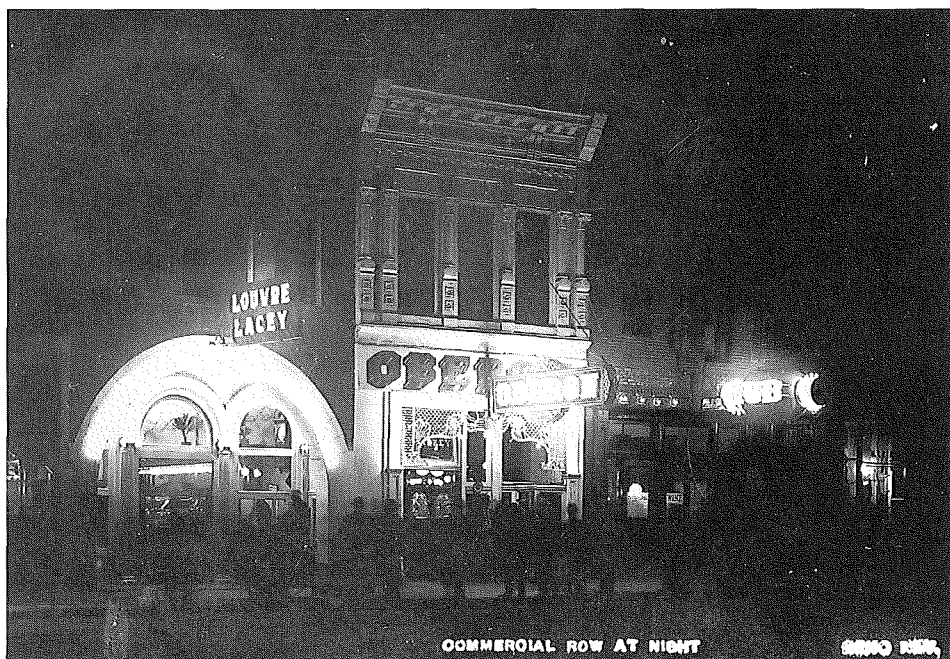
The introduction in the 1931 legislature of a bill to legalize most forms of

Eric Moody is Curator of Manuscripts at the Nevada Historical Society. This article, which was presented in somewhat different form as a paper at the Second Biennial Conference on Nevada History in 1991, is part of a larger study of legal gambling in the state during the period 1931 to 1945.

gambling came as no great surprise to anyone. Since 1910, as the result of a severe anti-gambling act passed the previous year, virtually all of the standard high stakes casino-type games—though certainly not all gambling—had been illegal in Nevada. The state gambling statute in effect at the beginning of 1931, a virtual copy of the 1909 law that had been enacted in 1911 and somewhat moderated in 1913 and 1915, made it a felony to play any of a number of enumerated popular “percentage” games or slot machines for money or any “representative of value.” It allowed only “social” card games (poker, stud-horse poker, five hundred, solo and whist) in which no money or prizes valued at two dollars or more were involved, and some pari-mutuel betting at horse racing events.<sup>2</sup> Beginning in 1919, when a state attorney general’s opinion clarified sections of the modified gambling act to permit commercial gambling involving legal social games in which the deal alternated and the house took no percentage of any winnings, Nevada’s cities issued licenses to saloons, pool halls and other establishments that wished to conduct such legal table games.<sup>3</sup> The ban against other, more popular games, such as faro, twenty-one, roulette and craps, remained in effect.

As might have been expected, clandestine gambling operations sprang up in many communities. Illegal games, conducted behind closed doors, in back rooms and basements, and on upper floors of commercial buildings, flourished all over Nevada. They were generally known to exist, by the public and government officials alike, but were rarely complained about or interfered with.<sup>4</sup> The operators of the illicit games, who often had legal gambling going on in the front or publicly visible areas of their establishments, did not complain much about the situation. While life would have been easier if all their games were legal, they were making money and they could bide their time until more favorable laws came along. Local officials and most of the public also seemed to accept gambling as it existed under the 1915 statute. Despite some later assertions to the contrary, there does not appear to have been any significant outcry or pressure from the people of Nevada to change the prevailing gambling law, even though it was apparent to any interested observer that cities and counties were losing revenue when gamblers preferred to run their popular illegal games instead of the licensed legitimate ones, and that “protection money” was sometimes being paid to local law enforcement officials who had authority to crack down on illegal activity.<sup>5</sup>

Still, there had been efforts to do away with the state’s prohibition on popular casino games, and to secure wide-open gambling. The efforts had been so persistent and serious that their renewal in the 1930s was hardly unexpected. During the 1931 legislative session and in the year or so preceding it, substantial sentiment for liberalization of the gambling law could be found in two quarters. The first (and lesser) of these was local governments, municipal and county, which hoped to secure new revenues from the licensing of a wider array of legal games. There is evidence in contemporary newspapers that a number of local



Commercial Row in Reno in the 1920s, where many of the clubs conducted illegal gambling operations. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

government officials and their interested supporters looked favorably upon wide-open gambling for this reason, but it is also clear that other local government leaders did not want any new legislation, preferring to have existing state and local gambling laws strictly enforced.<sup>6</sup> Local government sentiment for wide-open gambling was expressed as support for gambling legislation only after it became obvious that a bill was going to be introduced and that it stood a very good chance of being approved. Local officials apparently were not involved in the initiation of the gambling bill, presumably because they sensed opposition to it in their localities or because they were not sure how their constituents would react to such activity on their part.

Most of the impetus behind the movement for a liberalization of the gambling statute came not from within local government, or from the public, but from gamblers and owners of gambling establishments who wished to expand their operations, and from business interests in the state who stood to benefit from the additional visitors and their spending that an expansion of gambling activity was expected to attract. Gamblers and business people were more visible than any other identifiable groups involved in the efforts that began in the middle 1920s to secure the type of pro-gambling legislation that was embodied in the 1931 law.<sup>7</sup>

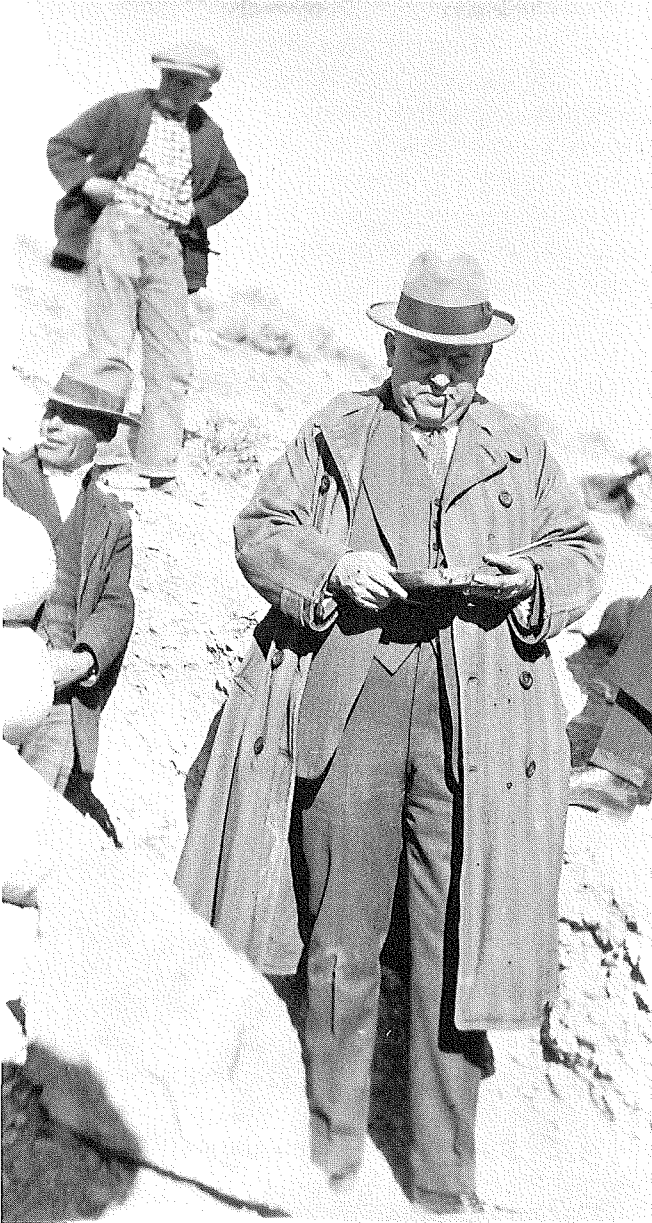
In 1925, a proposal to remove most of the restrictions on gambling that had been in effect since 1910 was introduced in the legislature by Assemblyman John Robbins of Elko County, but it was defeated in the lower house by a nearly two-to-one margin.<sup>8</sup> Two years later, in the next session of the legislature, a similar bill was introduced. This measure, AB 141, passed the assembly on a vote of 22 to 12, but lost in the senate, nine to eight.<sup>9</sup> It has been stated that in 1927 "men of both political parties" in the camp of George Wingfield, Nevada's preeminent political and financial figure, wanted and worked for both a divorce law with a three-month residence requirement and a wide-open gambling law because they felt such legislation would be good for business. Wingfield, himself, was one of the principal champions of the 1927 gambling bill.<sup>10</sup> Despite their best efforts, however, the supporters of AB 141—gamblers, businessmen and their political allies—were not quite able to push a gambling act through the legislature along with the liberal divorce law. There were relatively few demonstrations of support for wide-open gambling that year, and no newspaper editorials endorsing it.<sup>11</sup> There did appear, however, editorials opposing the gambling bill, and public protests and petitions from groups and thousands of individuals all over the state. The tide of negative reaction, which roared to a crest after the assembly approved the bill, seems to have intimidated enough senators so that the upper chamber, which had appeared as ready as the assembly to approve the measure, killed the gambling bill.<sup>12</sup>

The 1929 session of the legislature did not receive any gambling proposals from its members, even though the proponents of the 1927 measure were certainly still in favor of wide-open gambling. Probably, it was felt that conditions in the state had not changed sufficiently to make another effort worthwhile. It is known that George Wingfield was not present at the 1929 legislature. Still smarting from attacks made upon him during the previous year's election campaign, he momentarily pulled back from politics, regrouping in order to push his programs at a later date.<sup>13</sup>

The coming of the Great Depression in the early 1930s improved the outlook for legislative approval of wide-open gambling. Gamblers and a large segment of the business community still favored it, surely more than ever, and the worsening economic conditions in the state seemed to promise that liberalized gambling would be looked upon with more favor by the public and their political representatives than in the past, especially if it was presented as a business-promoting, income-producing measure. Certainly, the proponents of wide-open gambling hoped that a majority of the state's legislators would find it politically acceptable to publicly give their support to a measure many of them were already in sympathy with. During the final stages of the long campaign for wide-open gambling, in 1930 and 1931, gambling and other business interests were actively involved in politics and making their positions known.

While there did exist some popular, as well as local and state government, support for the wide-open gambling bill of 1931, it is extremely doubtful that the





George Wingfield inspecting mining prospects at Weepah in 1927. (*George Wingfield Papers, Nevada Historical Society*)

movement to create such legislation would ever have emanated from either of those circles, or from cautious legislators who were still not certain how the majority of the state's voters felt about legalized gambling. Beginning about the middle of 1930, it was the operators of gambling establishments, individual

businessmen and business groups, that were most openly involved in the promotion of gambling law change. In fact, they were almost exclusively the elements which were strongly, and sometimes publicly, advocating the wider legalization of gambling. Wingfield continued to exert his strong influence in behalf of a wide-open gambling law, but he typically preferred to stay behind the political scenes, supporting "liberal" legislative candidates and "laying the groundwork" for action on gambling laws by the legislature.<sup>14</sup> Other important proponents of legal gambling were responsible for bringing the fight for liberal legislation into the public arena.

It could be said that the drive for enactment of a new gambling law in 1931 first became public when large advertisements were placed in southern Nevada newspapers by Thomas H. Carroll during the spring, summer and fall of 1930. These advertisements gained attention around the state—and may have provided the basis for later contentions by Reno newspapers that the movement for wide-open gambling legislation originated in Las Vegas, and that its greatest support was found in southern Nevada.<sup>15</sup> Tom Carroll, a prominent Las Vegas real estate salesman and developer who would parlay his gambling promotion into an assembly seat in 1932, was a man willing to work for the vision he had of developing Las Vegas into a major tourist center, a mecca for wealthy gamblers whose money would enrich his city and the state. In his series of Las Vegas newspaper advertisements, the first of which he addressed "To the people of Nevada—To the Republican Party and to the Democratic Party of Nevada—To all service clubs and chambers of commerce in Nevada," Carroll presented his "new idea" of making Nevada the "Playground of the United States."<sup>16</sup> This and subsequent ads proposed that the state should enact "liberal" laws designed to increase tourism. Chief among these would be one providing for the licensing of gambling under the authority of a non-partisan state regulatory board. Horse racing was also to be encouraged. The legalization and licensing of gambling that was already going on, stated Carroll, would not only eliminate official corruption connected with gambling, but also help the state economically. Nevada, with its scenic outdoor attractions (such as Boulder Dam) and state regulated wide-open gambling, would attract tourists from all over the nation. Amusement money being spent by wealthy Americans in Europe, Cuba and Mexico could and should be spent in Nevada. It was time, Carroll contended, for Nevadans to recognize that gambling was among them to stay and that they "should all get together to develop it and enlarge it as a state industry." "We can," declared Carroll, "make wide-open gambling the biggest industry in the state, so that it with horse racing and tourist traffic, will bring more millions of dollars into Nevada than . . . any other industry we now have."<sup>17</sup>

Carroll's campaign—he even went to northern Nevada to present his views in person—was not greeted with universal approbation. Wingfield, who hoped that the gambling issue would keep a low public profile until the legislature met, no doubt felt that Carroll's efforts were unwise. The *Reno Evening Gazette* stated



Tom Carroll of Las Vegas, as pictured by Lew Hymers. (*Lew Hymers, Seen About Town* [Reno: 1944], 293)

editorially that the southern Nevadan had made some good points, but declined to endorse his ideas, while the *Nevada State Journal* of Reno published an editorial that said, while Carroll's gambling proposal was a good subject for debate, it was doubtful that either political party would champion open gambling. "Public sentiment in the state in recent years," declared the *Journal*, "has been strongly

opposed to open gambling. . . . The balance of power between the two major parties is too close for them to jeopardize the loss of any considerable number of votes on a nonessential issue."<sup>18</sup> No doubt certain gambling and business elements in Las Vegas, Reno and other areas of the state approved of Carroll's plan, but there were many who did not. S. R. Whitehead, president of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, wrote a letter to the editor of the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, Albert E. Cahlan, questioning whether it really was a good move "to advertise gambling as a business asset." Whitehead felt that publicity about Las Vegas's "wide-open conditions" hurt business. Not only did he contend that a large majority of Nevadans were opposed to the type of gambling proposed by Carroll, but he also asserted that even a majority of those engaged in gambling in Las Vegas would find it unacceptable.<sup>19</sup>

Whether it was a result of Tom Carroll's activities or not, wide-open gambling became a major subject of public discussion as the political season advanced. In September, just after the primary election, the anonymous political columnist for the *Reno Evening Gazette*, which was considered to have intimate contacts with elements of the state's political establishment, declared, "There will be a wide-open, licensing gambling bill before the next legislature—that is for sure." The writer predicted that, since gambling was already widespread and was in some cases being protected by public officials who were "being paid huge sums," the principal argument by proponents of the bill would be that the games should be legalized so that the money going to protection would be paid to state and local governments in the form of license fees. Any gambling bill introduced, the writer felt, would be "bitterly fought," but would also "stand a good chance of passage."<sup>20</sup>

Gambling did not emerge as an important issue in the general election campaign that occupied the month of October, undoubtedly because neither political party wanted to get publicly involved with it, although the Republicans were perceived to be in favor of liberalized gambling legislation.<sup>21</sup> Republican candidates, led by Governor Fred Balzar, who was running for reelection, claimed that Nevada was prospering economically (a claim assailed by Democrats and a number of independent observers who cited evidence to show that Nevada was, indeed, being sorely affected by the national depression). They defended the record of the Republican state administration and succeeded in winning most statewide as well as local contests in November. Balzar did well against his Democratic opponent, former Congressman Charles L. Richards, even in usually Democratic Las Vegas, an occurrence that occasioned a statement in a Reno newspaper that he had received so many votes because he had promised certain business elements in that community an "open town" with unrestricted gambling and liquor sales. The charge was disputed by the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, which maintained that Balzar had fared so well in the south simply because of the way he had handled southern Nevada's interests in the recent Boulder Dam Project fight.<sup>22</sup>

There was no question, however, that much of the business community in Las Vegas and elsewhere in Nevada was vitally interested in the gambling issue. Gamblers and gambling hall operators had demonstrated over the years that they wanted the state's restrictive gambling law changed, and a number of business people, such as the proprietors of hotels, restaurants, saloons, stores and other enterprises that would benefit from an increased volume of visitors to Nevada, had joined with them in the campaign to change the law. It is reasonable to assume that the ranks of business people favoring a return to wide-open gambling were augmented because of the economic doldrums of the early 1930s. Where, in 1927, both the Las Vegas and Reno chambers of commerce had publicly opposed wide-open gambling, no statements of protest issued from them in late 1930 and early 1931.<sup>23</sup> In fact, chamber of commerce activities relating to gambling during this period seem to offer evidence that Nevada's business community favored wide-open gambling.

In November, as predictions that the upcoming legislature would consider a gambling bill continued to appear in the state's newspapers, the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce decided to take a poll of its members to gauge the local business community's sentiment toward gambling.<sup>24</sup> Amid questions from the city's two newspapers, the *Review-Journal* and the *Age*, about the value of the poll because it asked respondents only if they wanted wide-open gambling or no gambling at all, and not how they felt about the existing gambling situation, the survey was conducted and results were tabulated.<sup>25</sup> Of the 117 ballots returned from 188 mailed out, 90 favored wide-open gambling and 37 a ban on gambling. The chamber members present at the meeting where the results of the poll were announced joined with President Whitehead, who was not a supporter of wide-open gambling, in declaring that the results were valueless and expunged them from the minutes of the gathering.<sup>26</sup> Subsequently, the *Review-Journal* editorialized, "we're no better off now than before as far as knowing just what business sentiment is," but it was clear in the wake of the survey that great support did exist among Las Vegas business people for a liberalized gambling law.<sup>27</sup> A second chamber of commerce survey, this time conducted in Winnemucca late in January of 1931, just after the legislature had convened, resulted in sixty-eight businessmen signing a petition favoring wide-open gambling, and only one signing another petition favoring the existing gambling law.<sup>28</sup>

The outcomes of the Las Vegas and Winnemucca chamber of commerce surveys, along with Carroll's widely publicized advertising, and the discussion of it, demonstrated several things. They not only made it clear that Las Vegas had joined Reno as a major stronghold of pro-gambling sentiment, and that demands for a new gambling law should be expected from both cities, but also that strong business sentiment for a wide-open gambling law existed elsewhere in the state.<sup>29</sup>

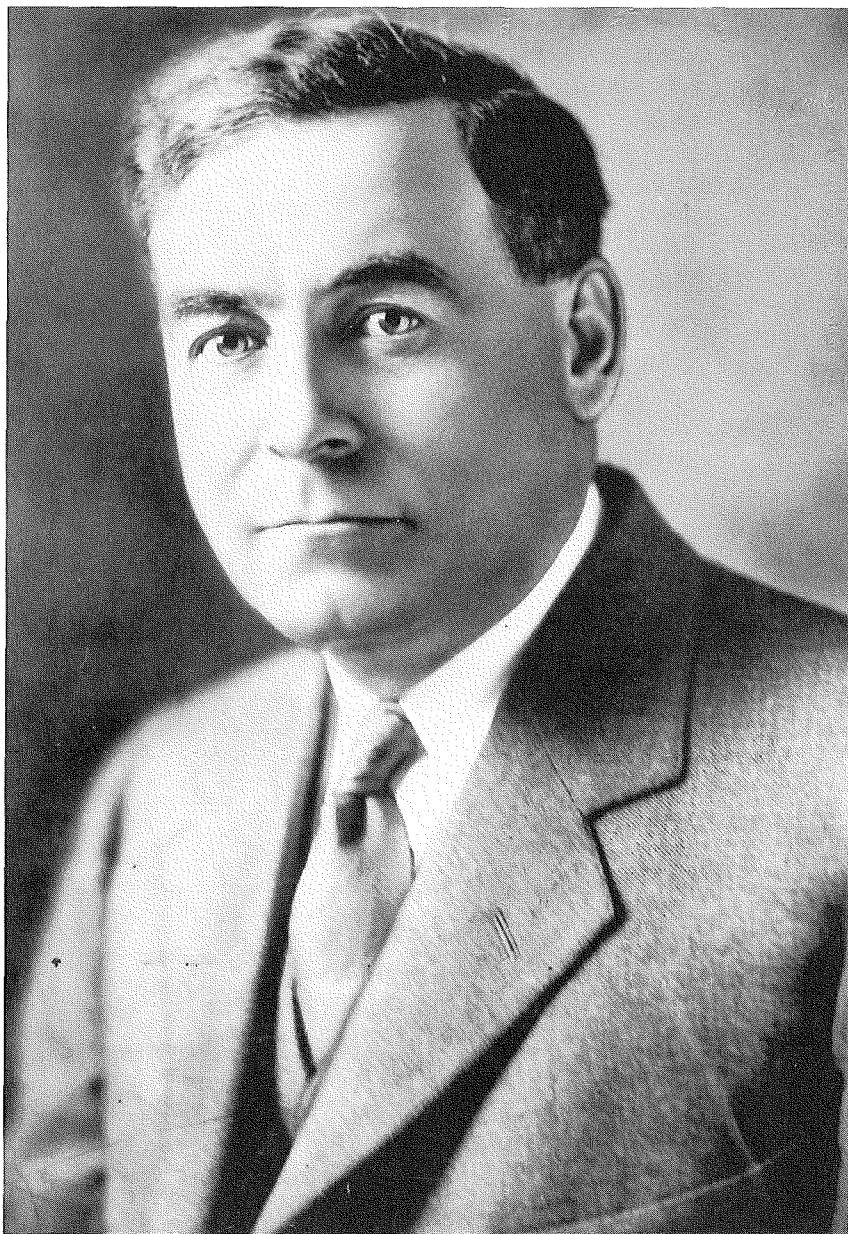
The thirty-fifth session of the Nevada legislature began its deliberations on January 19, 1931, as the *Carson City Daily Appeal* intoned that the gathering was

probably more important than any other held in recent years because of the prevailing unsettled economic situation in the state and nation, and the fact that the legislators would have to deal with the problems arising from it.<sup>30</sup> The Republicans had control of the senate, thirteen to four, but had managed to elect only seventeen assemblymen to the Democrats' eighteen. However, when the lower house was organized, two independents, Will Cobb of Storey County and C. C. Carpenter of Pershing County, both of whom had been identified as registered Democrats, surprisingly voted with the Republicans to elect Douglass H. Tandy speaker of the assembly.<sup>31</sup> The unexpected control of both houses by the Republicans, more of whom than Democrats were thought to favor wide-open gambling, certainly was seen by those pushing gambling legislation as something that improved their chances for success.

As the legislature settled down to its work, it began considering a number of widely predicted agenda items, among them reapportionment of the assembly, repeal of existing primary election and rabies control laws, regulation of work at the Boulder Dam project, a proposal to limit the length of railroad trains within the state, funding of highway construction, labor legislation, enactment of a gasoline tax, relief for Humboldt River water users—and wide-open gambling.<sup>32</sup>

The expected gambling bill was not a center of attention in the legislature, but it always seemed to be hovering in the background, promising one of the major political fights of the session. When Governor Balzar delivered his message to the legislature on January 20, he made no reference to the anticipated gambling bill. His failure to openly take a position on the gambling issue occasioned comment in a number of newspapers.<sup>33</sup> When he had earlier been asked about wide-open gambling, Balzar claimed that he had not received any requests for support of a gambling bill, and contended that the only place where such a measure was being discussed was Las Vegas. He indicated that he wouldn't oppose the passage of a wide-open gambling bill, but neither would he exert any effort in its behalf.<sup>34</sup>

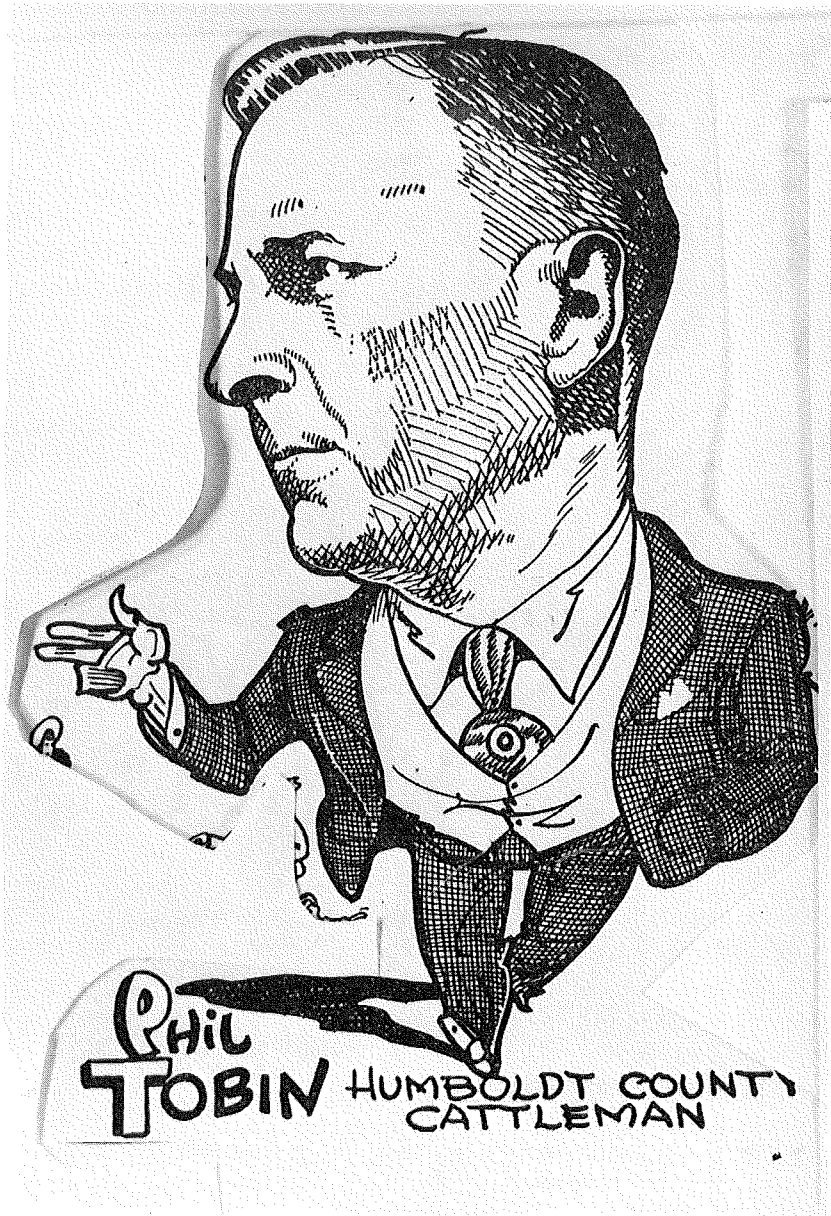
Balzar was not the only government official reluctant, presumably because of fear of an adverse political reaction, to publicly associate himself with gambling "reform." During January, as the legislature prepared for business and then began its work, speculation continued about when the gambling proposal would appear, but no names could be attached to it as sponsors. Right at the end of January and in the first weeks of February, when it was believed that introduction of a gambling bill was imminent, it was reported that legislators were, in *Las Vegas Review-Journal* editor Al Cahlan's words, "eagerly dodging the responsibility of fostering the bill" (actually, there appear to have been several versions of "the bill" circulating among legislators).<sup>35</sup> While it was said that "every member of both houses disclaims any intention of introducing a wide-open gambling bill," it was also rumored that at least two assemblymen had been carrying copies of the bill around in their pockets, and that Republican Senator Noble Getchell of Lander County would sponsor the legislation.<sup>36</sup> That the bill would



Governor Fred Balzar. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

be introduced was never in doubt; while there may have been good moral reasons for prohibiting gambling, the state legislators had apparently concluded, as Al Cahlan put it in his *Review-Journal* column of January 28, that "important economic and governmental considerations . . . outweigh the moral issue." On February 12, the *Reno Evening Gazette*, still playing name-the-

sponsor-of-the-bill, announced that it was believed a "Republican member of the house from northern Nevada has agreed to father it," and the next day Philip M. Tobin, a first-year assemblyman and rancher from Humboldt County, introduced the measure as Assembly Bill 98.<sup>37</sup>



Assemblyman Phil Tobin, as pictured by Lew Hymers. (*Lew Hymers, Seen About Town* [Reno: 1944], 240)



There had been substantial reasons for the delay in the appearance of the gambling bill, and for legislators' reluctance to sponsor it. Beyond the personal political risk perceived by individual lawmakers, there had been considerable disagreement over just what the provisions of the proposed law should be, among not only legislators, but also local governments and the state's gambling operators. Officials of local governments, especially cities, who by the beginning of 1931 seem generally to have accepted the fact that a new gambling law would be passed, were interested in having that law incorporate provisions stipulating local control over licensing and that a major share of license revenue would go to the governmental jurisdictions in which games were conducted. Ely Mayor Alfred Tamblyn, who eventually came out in favor of the open gambling bill, asked legislators to fashion the proposed law so that the cities, not the state, would receive most of the license fees.<sup>38</sup> Concerns were expressed by the editors of Sparks and Winnemucca newspapers, no doubt reflecting the uneasiness of local officials, that the new gambling law, as it was originally proposed, would result in less license revenue for their cities than was being received under the existing law, because the counties and the state would receive a percentage of the fees that had been going entirely into the city treasuries.<sup>39</sup> The city of Sparks, claimed *Tribune* editor Edwin C. Mulcahy, who was also a member of the state assembly, would lose over \$6,000 a year.<sup>40</sup> Additional comment reflecting local concern over licensing and revenue appeared in other newspapers.<sup>41</sup>

The level of license fees, rather than their distribution, was the primary concern of gambling interests. Apparently, gamblers felt that the proposed fees—described by one observer early in February as \$75 per month per table and \$25 per month on money-paying slot machines—were too high.<sup>42</sup> Small operators and those doing business in small communities were least enthusiastic about the high fees, feeling that they would virtually eliminate all gambling establishments except the larger ones in Reno, Las Vegas, and a few other well-established gambling centers, such as Ely.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, gambling interests were busy early in the 1931 legislative session, lobbying not only for the passage of a wide-open gambling act, but also for the type of law they wanted.

Lobbying was heavy both for and against the gambling bill. When freshman Assemblyman Clel Georgetta, a White Pine County Republican, first arrived at the Golden Hotel in Reno, which was a hangout for legislators, he found that the lobby (appropriately) was full of lobbyists, the "predominating element" being gamblers and railroad men whose concern was the proposed train limit bill.<sup>44</sup> Among the lobbyists at the legislature, undoubtedly, was John V. Mueller, then Wingfield's key representative for legislative matters.<sup>45</sup> Gamblers and operators of gambling halls were active in support of a wide-open law; they certainly became more so early in January when all illegal games in Ely and its neighboring towns were closed down by a new White Pine County district attorney who insisted that the existing state gambling law be enforced.<sup>46</sup> The White Pine closures, which the *Reno Evening Gazette* pointed to as proof that illegal gambling

could be stopped if local officials wanted to do so, certainly caused great concern among gambling operators around the state that the same sort of crackdown could occur at any time in other cities and counties.<sup>47</sup> Suddenly, the gambling status quo must have seemed not so acceptable to the state's gamblers, even those who had previously felt no great need for a change in the existing law.

George Wingfield favored the adoption of a wide-open gambling law in 1931, and he worked for its passage.<sup>48</sup> There was little publicly available evidence of this at the time, but neither the powerful and widely resented Wingfield nor Governor Balzar, who was considered to be "Wingfield's man," announced any opposition to wide-open gambling. Wingfield, of course, did own several hotels, most notably Reno's Riverside and Golden, and some of his close associates, such as James McKay, an owner of the Bank Club in Reno and the Cal-Neva Lodge at Lake Tahoe, and one of the state's best known "sporting" figures, were involved in gambling. Certainly, it would have been uncharacteristic for Wingfield to have openly supported wide-open gambling, for he made a conscious effort to distance himself in the public eye from what some considered disreputable episodes in his past, as when he was a professional gambler and saloon proprietor. He also perceived that his public backing of a wide-open gambling bill, passage of which he believed was important to his own business interests as well as for the economic development of the state, could be detrimental to its success.<sup>49</sup> It is no doubt significant, and the significance was certainly not lost on Nevadans of the time, that the *Reno Evening Gazette*, edited and published by Wingfield's constant and bitter foe Graham Sanford, announced its opposition to wide-open gambling. The journal contended that the existing gambling law was quite acceptable, and that any "public revenues . . . derived from wide-open gambling under a licensing system would never compensate the public for the losses that would follow, such as the diversion of money from the unfavorable advertising which the state would receive."<sup>50</sup> This was a conservative, pro-business stance shared by many Nevadans, but one that definitely did not coincide with Wingfield's thinking.

Despite the *Reno Evening Gazette's* position on the gambling bill, no significant part of the lobbying and public protest that surfaced against the measure came from the state's business community.<sup>51</sup> The delay in the introduction of the gambling bill gave opponents of gambling more time to organize and air their views than they had had in 1927, and their ranks swelled to a considerable number. The opposition was composed mostly of educators, professional people, service clubs, ministers and religious groups, and women's organizations. Frank Williams, a University of Nevada regent from Clark County and a perennial foe of gambling, tried to convince the board of regents to adopt a resolution opposing wide-open gambling, but the other regents, one of whom was George Wingfield, refused to go along with him, stating that they felt it was inappropriate for their body to take a position on the matter.<sup>52</sup> In the weeks preceding Phil Tobin's introduction of the gambling bill on February 13, resolutions and

petitions from such groups or institutions as the Twentieth Century Club in Reno, the Sparks Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Lovelock Parent-Teachers Association, were received by the legislature, as was a substitute gambling bill (that did little more than restate the existing law) which the Woman Citizens' Club of Reno had drafted after sponsoring a public meeting on the gambling question.<sup>53</sup>

The strongest demonstration of opposition to the wide-open gambling bill, however, took place February 16 at a public hearing held by the assembly's committee on public morals, to which the bill had been referred. Seventy-five men and women attended the hearing; no one spoke in favor of the bill. (Assemblyman G. D. Spradling of Ormsby County came closer than anyone else to being a friendly voice when he took the floor to recommend that all revenues received from city gambling licenses under a wide-open gambling law, if one was enacted, go to the cities).<sup>54</sup> Among those opposing the bill, either on moral ground, because adoption of wide-open gambling was seen as a "surrender" to individuals who were openly violating the law, or because it was felt that the proposed law would not provide predicted revenue, were the presidents of the Nevada Federation of Women's Clubs, the Reno Woman Citizens' Club, and the Reno branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Also speaking in opposition were Mary Franzman, Nevada's Republican national committee-woman, Peter Ferguson of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Sparks, a representative of the Reno Methodist Church, and Walter Kennedy, a Reno attorney and former assemblyman.<sup>55</sup> Newspapers commented on the strength of the opposition that was surfacing to the gambling bill and predicted that, as a result of the opposition, the measure would be heavily amended to make it more widely acceptable.<sup>56</sup>

An absence of visible supporters of the gambling bill, both at the public hearing and in the legislative halls, as debate on the measure heated up in the middle of February, also occasioned comment. One newspaper felt compelled to remark on the surprising lack of pro-gambling lobbyists then at the capital, a condition that contrasted markedly with other years when gambling bills had been under consideration—and even from the early days of the current session.<sup>57</sup> The absence from public view of lobbyists for the gambling bill was most likely due to the pro-gambling element's belief that events were proceeding the way they wanted, and thus it was wise, at that late point in the game, to assume a low profile and avoid stirring up any further opposition.

Immediately after the morals committee hearing, the assembly set about making alterations in AB 98 which lawmakers hoped would gain it more acceptance, not only among its critics, but also among those who favored wide-open gambling but were not happy about some of the bill's provisions. There had already been some revisions of the bill as it was originally proposed, and some even before it was introduced: On February 13, after it had been made public, but before Tobin presented it to the assembly, the proposed monthly license fee for

slot machines was halved (from \$25 to \$12.50), the monthly fee for licenses for table games in communities of less than 1,500 was reduced to \$50 (it was \$75 in larger towns), and the state, county and city shares of license revenues were changed so that fees received in a city were split 25 percent for the municipality, 25 percent for the state, and 50 percent for the county (previously, a city's share was 50 percent and a county's 50 percent).<sup>58</sup> These early alterations had not made the bill immediately acceptable to everyone. Representatives of cities were sure that their share of license revenues was too low and that the cities, not the counties, should control licensing within municipal boundaries. Gambling operators desired still lower licensing fees, and a number of legislators wanted to protect what they considered the public interest with a variety of amendments.<sup>59</sup> Doug Tandy, for example, was expected to propose an amendment requiring that all playing cards used in licensed games be printed by the state printing office, while Lindley C. Branson (who said that he was personally opposed to gambling) offered amendments allocating a percentage of all license receipts to a state invalid and old age pension fund, and providing for the question of wide-open gambling to be placed on the next general election ballot in 1932, without it having to meet the requirements for a referendum.<sup>60</sup>

The assembly public morals committee did not issue a favorable report on the gambling bill until March 6—before which date the legislature had been busy considering other important matters, among them a “six weeks” divorce bill (like the gambling bill, favored by Wingfield as part of his economic stimulus plan for business) which had been introduced in response to several other states’ bids to capture some of Nevada’s lucrative divorce trade by lowering their residence requirements for divorce to ninety days. When the gambling bill was brought to the floor of the assembly, it had been further revised. A uniform statewide license fee of \$50 per table per month was now set for the various games that were prohibited under the 1915 gambling law (certain other “card games,” such as poker, bridge and whist were to be licensed at \$25), the slot machine license fee was further reduced to \$10 per month, and the cities’ share of local license revenues was restored to 50 percent (the counties’ portion was lowered to 25 percent).<sup>61</sup>

The ensuing debate in the assembly was a heated one, with some legislators, notably C. L. Noble of Churchill and Howard Malone of Washoe, attacking the bill on moral grounds. Others, such as Edwin Mulcahy of Washoe and W. T. Mathews of Elko, criticized it because they felt it did not allow local governments sufficient discretion in determining who would be granted gambling licenses.<sup>62</sup> Supporters of the bill, Tobin, Guy Walts of Washoe, Fred Alward of Clark, and M. C. Hamlin of Mineral among them, declared that the proposed law would increase revenues for the state’s governments, but they spent most of their time contending that the bill should pass because it would clean up the illegal gambling that was already present throughout the state.<sup>63</sup>

On March 9, the assembly approved the gambling bill, without Branson’s

major amendments, which were introduced and defeated on the floor that day. The vote was 24-11, with a number of previously vocal critics, such as Mulcahy and Branson, voting for the measure.<sup>64</sup> Mulcahy supported the bill after the so-called Frohlich amendment was added, giving cities, counties and towns authority to levy additional license fees if they so desired.<sup>65</sup> Eight days later, the senate approved the bill, 13-3, with only minor changes, and on March 19 Governor Balzar signed it—and the six weeks divorce bill—into law.<sup>66</sup>

Some newspapers in the state, the *Elko Free Press* and *Ely Daily Times* for example, praised the legislature's action on the gambling bill. Others, the *Tonopah Times-Bonanza* and *Las Vegas Age* among them, exhibited a "wait and see" attitude while admitting that the gambling law would probably be good for business. Still others, including the *Reno Evening Gazette* and the *Carson City Daily Appeal*, which found the passage of the gambling and divorce bills "nothing to be proud of," criticized it.<sup>67</sup> Gambling establishments in Reno, Las Vegas, Ely, Winnemucca and elsewhere rushed to get ready for expected crowds of patrons; local governments began to grapple with the new licensing and regulatory requirements thrust upon them; George Wingfield declared to his bankers that "we got everything we wanted from the legislature"; and Frank Williams and other opponents of legal gambling started making plans to bring about the repeal of the new gambling act.<sup>68</sup>

An examination of the primary sources of information relating to Nevada's legalization of wide-open gambling in 1931 leads inescapably to the conclusion that the gambling law was enacted because certain business interests in the state wanted it, because there was strong support for it in influential financial and political quarters, and because prevailing economic conditions permitted its proponents to overcome the opposition to it. The law was the culmination of a serious pro-gambling movement that began in the mid-1920s, but which was unsuccessful in that decade because most public officials believed that a majority of Nevadans and the state's business community, beyond those elements intimately involved with gambling, were opposed to legalization. The adverse effects of the nationwide depression in the early 1930s, despite assertions by Republican state administrators that Nevada was substantially untouched by the economic crisis, increased the business community's receptiveness toward wide-open gambling as a device for stimulating business activity. They also seem to have diminished public resistance to a liberalization of the state's gambling law. State legislators and government officials, especially those representing municipalities and counties, sensed the changes in the attitudes of the business community and the general public and determined that it had become politically safe to support legislation desired by a substantial portion of their constituents. Some of these officials had undoubtedly long favored, for a variety of reasons, some moderation of the state's anti-gambling position; others surely came to view such a change as desirable only because of the prevailing economic

LOOKING WEST ON FREMONT STREET, LAS VEGAS, NEVADA



Fremont Street in Las Vegas in the early 1930s. Legalized gambling turned these blocks into "Glitter Gulch." (*Nevada Historical Society*)

conditions. Nevada's legislators, buoyed by their perception of increased support, or at least tolerance for the measure, overwhelmingly approved wide-open gambling. However, because they were still not entirely certain of the extent of public support for what they had done, the legislators justified their action largely on high moral and public welfare grounds: The law was enacted to eliminate rampant illegal gambling and related political corruption, and to allow local governments to collect new revenues they badly needed.

The public statements of legislators notwithstanding, it is demonstrable that the 1931 gambling law was not initiated and adopted primarily for reasons that had anything to do with legal and political reform or local government taxes. Nor did the statute spring into existence, as some have claimed, because the people of Nevada, longing for a restoration of their frontier traditions, demanded it. It was introduced because an economic interest group, gamblers and the operators of economically allied businesses, desired it. It was adopted, ultimately, because a larger economic (and political) interest group, the Nevada business community, and a relatively small one consisting of the state's local governments, believed that they would benefit from it. Nevada's wide-open gambling law, as Phil Tobin said at the time he introduced it, was purely a business proposition.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Discussions in general histories include: Richard G. Lillard, *Desert Challenge: An Interpretation of Nevada* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1942), 326; Gilman M. Ostrander, *Nevada: The Great*

Rotten Borough, 1859–1964 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966), 207; James W. Hulse, *The Nevada Adventure; A History*, 2nd ed., rev. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1969), 252; Robert Laxalt, *Nevada: A Bicentennial History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), 98; Elbert B. Edwards, *200 Years in Nevada* (Salt Lake City: Elbert B. Edwards, 1978), 359; Russell R. Elliott, with the assistance of William D. Rowley, *History of Nevada*, 2nd ed., rev. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 277–78; and James W. Hulse, *The Silver State: Nevada's Heritage Reinterpreted* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991), 264. Among the notable works that examine the growth of the “gaming industry” in the state or in certain areas of it, and discuss the 1931 legalization are: Oscar Lewis, *Sagebrush Casinos: The Story of Legal Gambling in Nevada* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1953), 56–57; Kenneth D. Scott, *The Big Apple (Nevada's Legalized Gambling)* (New York: Vantage Press, 1972), 12; Perry Bruce Kaufman, *The Best City of Them All: A History of Las Vegas, 1930–1960* (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1974), 31–32; Jerome H. Skolnick, *House of Cards: The Legalization and Control of Casino Gambling* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1978), 107–8; John M. Findlay, *People of Chance: Gambling in American Society from Jamestown to Las Vegas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 118–19; Eugene P. Moehring, *Resort City in the Sunbelt: Las Vegas, 1930–1970* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1989), 20. Raymond I. Sawyer's *Reno, Where the Gamblers Go!* (Reno: Sawston Publishing, 1976), 18–19, a fascinating but only intermittently reliable book, departs from the pattern of the above-mentioned works by asserting correctly that the 1931 legislation was the result of lobbying by gamblers and businessmen, most especially George Wingfield, although the account presented of how this happened is open to some question.

<sup>2</sup>Nevada, *Statutes* (1909), 307–09; *Revised Laws of Nevada* (1912), 1860–62; Nevada, *Statutes* (1913), 235–36; Nevada, *Statutes* (1915), 31, 462–63.

<sup>3</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (11, 12 July 1919). For an example of the municipal gambling ordinances, see Reno City Ordinance No. 257 (adopted 11 August 1919), *Charter and Ordinances of the City of Reno*, July, 1920.

<sup>4</sup>Lillard, *Desert Challenge*, 326; Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 279; Lewis, *Sagebrush Casinos*, 55–56; *Carson City Daily Appeal* (editorial, 7 February 1931); Skolnick, *House of Cards*, 107; Sawyer, *Reno*, 14–16; Silvio Petricciani, *The Evolution of Gaming in Nevada: The Twenties to the Eighties* (Reno: Oral History Project, University of Nevada-Reno Library, University of Nevada System, 1982), 99–100; John Sanford, *Printer's Ink in My Blood* (Reno: Oral History Project, University of Nevada, Reno, 1972), 54–55. Reno, which boasted numerous illegal as well as legal gambling operations, was the acknowledged gambling center of the state under Mayor Edwin E. Roberts and a supportive city council who chose to ignore, sometimes even publicly, the illegal games.

<sup>5</sup>Petricciani, *Evolution of Gaming*, 99–100; Lillard, *Desert Challenge*, 326; Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 279; Sawyer, *Reno*, 16; *Reno Evening Gazette* (“Politics” column, 10 January 1931); *Carson City Daily Appeal* (editorial, 7 February 1931); Lewis, *Sagebrush Casinos*, 55–57. Lewis attributes the move to legalize gambling in 1931 to the “generality of the natives,” who had grown tired of the abuses existing under the prevailing restrictive gambling law; but at the same time, he indicates that it was a specific (but unspecified) element of the population that was advocating the move. An examination of Nevada newspapers and of governmental records in Reno and Las Vegas, where most gambling was concentrated, from the later 1920s to 1931 fails to provide evidence that most, or even a large proportion of Nevadans, wanted to legalize gambling because of dissatisfaction with the existing regulation of gambling.

In regard to the loss of licensing revenues caused by illegal gambling, Reno provides an example of what was occurring during the 1920s. While gambling activity appears to have increased throughout the decade, the number of first-quarter licenses for legal games (tables) steadily declined, from fifty in 1920, to thirty in 1925, and just nine in 1931. Annual revenue from gambling licenses (\$600 per year per table, according to Reno City Ordinance No. 259 adopted in 1919) declined during the period from \$30,000 to \$5,400. (The Reno City Council's Register of Actions lists gambling licenses issued during the period 1920–1931.) Facts didn't prevent Mayor Roberts from indicating to a newspaper reporter in March of 1931 that the city had been “deriving about \$35,000 a year from card games” right up until the time the wide-open gambling law was enacted. (Reno) *Nevada State Journal* (21 March 1931).

<sup>6</sup>Statements providing evidence of local government interest in wide-open gambling began to appear in newspapers about the time the 1931 legislature convened, see, for example, *Reno Evening*

*Gazette* ("Politics," 10 January 1931); *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (A. E. Cahlan's column, "From Where I Sit," 9 January 1931); (Reno) *Nevada State Journal* (editorial, 18 January 1931); *Carson City Daily Appeal* (editorials, 7 and 14 February 1931). At the same time, there are indications that the officials of Reno, Las Vegas, and a number of other municipalities, such as Sparks, Elko and Carson City, either saw no need for an open gambling law or lacked enthusiasm for it. Elliott, *History of Nevada*, 280–81; Phillip I. Earl, "The Legalization of Gambling in Nevada," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, XXIV (Spring 1981), 41–42, 44–45; *Carson City Daily Appeal* (editorial, 7 February 1931); (Reno) *Nevada State Journal* (21 March 1931).

<sup>7</sup>Even before the mid-1920s, there had been frequent efforts both to liberalize and to make more stringent the state's anti-gambling laws. The 1913 and 1915 gambling statutes removed various restrictions, but during the 1919 legislative session, for example, unsuccessful attempts were made to prohibit all forms of gambling (Assembly Bill 34) and to restore some gambling for money (a substitute for AB 34 offered by White Pine County Assemblyman Charles S. Chandler). The Chandler measure sought to allow the playing of enumerated "social" card games for money, with limits being placed on the amount of wagers (the bill also would have made betting on horse races, legal under the 1915 law, illegal). Assembly Substitute for Assembly Bill No. 34, (13 February 1919). Legislative Bill File, Nevada Division of Archives and Records, Carson City; *Reno Evening Gazette* (14, 18 February 1919).

<sup>8</sup>*Nevada, Journal of the Senate* (1925), 151, 207, 224; (Reno) *Nevada State Journal* (26 February 1927); *Reno Evening Gazette* (25, 28 February 1927).

<sup>9</sup>*Nevada, Journal of the Assembly* (1927), 150, 253; *Nevada, Journal of the Senate* (1927), 220.

<sup>10</sup>Barbara C. Thornton, *George Wingfield in Nevada From 1896 to 1931* (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Nevada, Reno, 1967), 26–27. The involvement of Wingfield and his associates is also noted in the *Las Vegas Review* (1 March 1927). For an insightful discussion of Wingfield's position on gambling in 1927, see C. Elizabeth Raymond, *George Wingfield: Owner and Operator of Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1992), 138–39.

<sup>11</sup>The 1927 *Journal of the Assembly* records two petitions being received in support of AB 141, one signed by fifty-two "Representative Taxpayers of Elko" and the other by a reported 1,100 Reno residents. *Nevada, Journal of the Assembly* (1927), 212, 235.

<sup>12</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette*, (26, 28 February, 11, 15, 16 March 1927); (Reno) *Nevada State Journal* (26 February, 12, 13, 17 March 1927); *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (1, 4, 8 March 1927); *Nevada, Journal of the Assembly* (1927), 165, 183, 245.

<sup>13</sup>Raymond, *George Wingfield*, 192.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>15</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* ("Politics," 24 January 1931); *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (A. E. Cahlan, "From Where I Sit," 9, 16 January 1931); *Elko Free Press* (5 January 1931).

<sup>16</sup>*Las Vegas Review-Journal* (9 May 1930).

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.* (9 May, 23 September, 16 October, 10 December 1930).

<sup>18</sup>Raymond, *George Wingfield*, 194; *Reno Evening Gazette* (13 May 1930); (Reno) *Nevada State Journal* (13 May 1930).

<sup>19</sup>*Las Vegas Review-Journal* (22 November 1930).

<sup>20</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* ("Politics," 6 September 1930).

<sup>21</sup>(Reno) *Nevada State Journal* (19 March 1931); Raymond, *George Wingfield*, 194.

<sup>22</sup>*Las Vegas Review-Journal* (12 November 1930).

<sup>23</sup>The chambers of commerce in both Reno and Las Vegas protested the 1927 bill after its introduction. *Las Vegas Review* (1, 4 March 1927).

<sup>24</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (8, 22 November 1930); *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (19 November 1930).

<sup>25</sup>*Las Vegas Review-Journal* (19, 22, 25 November 1930).

<sup>26</sup>*Ibid.* (22, 25 November 1930).

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.* (26 November 1930).

<sup>28</sup>(Winnemucca) *Humboldt Star* (22–24 January 1931).

<sup>29</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* ("Politics," 8, 22 November 1930).

<sup>30</sup>*Carson City Daily Appeal* (19 January 1931).

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*; *Reno Evening Gazette* (6 November 1930); (Winnemucca) *Humboldt Star* (19 January 1931).



<sup>32</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* ("Politics," 8 November 1930); (Winnemucca) *Humboldt Star* (18 December 1930); *Carson City Daily Appeal* (19 January 1931).

<sup>33</sup>*Ely Daily Times* (5 January 1931); (Winnemucca) *Humboldt Star* (20 January 1931); *Reno Evening Gazette* ("Politics," 3 January 1931).

<sup>34</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* ("Politics," 3 January 1931); *Elko Daily Free Press* (5 January 1931).

<sup>35</sup>(Winnemucca) *Humboldt Star* (6 February 1931); *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (A. E. Cahlan, "From Where I Sit," 28 January 1931); *Reno Evening Gazette* ("Politics," 24 January, 7 February 1931). The *Reno Evening Gazette* of 7 February noted that Democratic leaders in the lower house had advised members of that party "to have nothing to do" with introducing the measure, since the Republicans controlled the house and, if they wanted the bill, they should sponsor it.

<sup>36</sup>*Las Vegas Journal* (A. E. Cahlan, "From Where I Sit," 28 January 1931); *Reno Evening Gazette* (30 January, "Politics," 7 February 1931); (Winnemucca) *Humboldt Star* (6 February 1931).

<sup>37</sup>(Winnemucca) *Humboldt Star* (16 February 1931).

<sup>38</sup>*Ely Daily Times* (8 January 1931); *Reno Evening Gazette* (20 February 1931).

<sup>39</sup>*Sparks Tribune* (16 February 1931); (Winnemucca) *Humboldt Star* (16 February 1931).

<sup>40</sup>*Sparks Tribune* (16 February 1931).

<sup>41</sup>See for example, *Carson City Daily Appeal* (14 February 1931); *Reno Evening Gazette* (30 January, 18, 21 February 1931); *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (editorial, 26 November 1930).

<sup>42</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* ("Politics," 7 February 1931).

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.* ("Politics," 10, 30, 31 January, "Politics," 7 February 1931).

<sup>44</sup>Diary (17 January 1931) Clel Georgetta Papers, Nevada Historical Society, Reno.

<sup>45</sup>There is no question that Wingfield exerted pressure on lawmakers to get the measures he wanted through the 1931 legislature. While there is little direct evidence of Mueller's activities, it is inconceivable that Wingfield would not have sent his most capable and trusted emissary to the legislature in Carson City. "Men Who Match Our Mountains," *Sierra Magazine* (Special issue, 1963), 59; Raymond, *George Wingfield*, 152, 194–95; James G. Scrugham, ed., *Nevada: A Narrative of the Conquest of a Frontier Land* (Chicago: American Historical Society, 1935) Vol. II, 205–06.

<sup>46</sup>(Winnemucca) *Humboldt Star* (18 December 1930); Sawyer, *Reno*, 18–19; Petricciani, *The Evolution of Gaming*, 101–02; *Las Vegas Review-Journal* (12, 13 January 1931); *Ely Daily Times* (10 January 1931).

<sup>47</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (5 February 1931).

<sup>48</sup>Sawyer, *Reno*, 18–19.

<sup>49</sup>Raymond, *George Wingfield*, 193–95.

<sup>50</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (5 February 1931).

<sup>51</sup>A resolution from the Ely Business Women's Club was one of the few statements of support from business or women's groups. *Ely Daily Times* (16 February 1931).

<sup>52</sup>*Las Vegas Review-Journal* (25 December 1930, 29 January 1931).

<sup>53</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (2 February 1931); *Lovelock Review-Miner* (12 February 1931); minutes of meetings of the Woman Citizens' Club (28 January, 4, 11 February 1931) and copy of the proposed gambling bill. Sarah Emeline Mack Papers, Nevada Historical Society, Reno.

<sup>54</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (17 February 1931); (Winnemucca) *Humboldt Star* (17, 20 February 1931).

<sup>55</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (17 February 1931); (Winnemucca) *Humboldt Star* (17 February 1931).

<sup>56</sup>(Winnemucca) *Humboldt Star* (17, 20 February 1931); *Elko Daily Free Press* (20 February 1931).

<sup>57</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (21 February 1931).

<sup>58</sup>*Sparks Tribune* (13 February 1931); *Reno Evening Gazette* (13 February 1931); *Ely Daily Times* (13 February 1931); (Winnemucca) *Humboldt Star* (13 February 1931).

<sup>59</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (18 February, 7 March 1931); (Winnemucca) *Humboldt Star* (14, 20 February 1931).

<sup>60</sup>*Ely Daily Times* (14 February 1931); (Winnemucca) *Humboldt Star* (14 February 1931); *Reno Evening Gazette* (17 February 1931). University of Nevada Regent Frank Williams supported the proposal for a vote by the public and warned that, if Branson's amendment failed, the question of wide-open gambling would be taken directly to the people. *Reno Evening Gazette* (21 February 1931).

<sup>61</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (6, 7 March 1931); Raymond, *George Wingfield*, 193–95.

<sup>62</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (10 March 1931); *Ely Daily Times* (10 March 1931); *Carson City Daily Appeal* (9 March 1931); Diary (10 March 1931) Clel Georgetta Papers, Nevada Historical Society, Reno.

<sup>63</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (10 March 1931); *Carson City Daily Appeal* (9 March 1931).

<sup>64</sup>*Carson City Daily Appeal* (10 March 1931); *Ely Daily Times* (9 March 1931); *Diary* (9 March 1931). Clel Georgetta Papers, Nevada Historical Society, Reno.

<sup>65</sup>Nevada, *Journal of the Assembly* (1931), 254; (Winnemucca) *Humboldt Star* (10 March 1931).

<sup>66</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (17 March 1931); *Carson City Daily Appeal* (17, 20 March 1931); Nevada, *Statutes* (1931), 165–69.

<sup>67</sup>*Elko Daily Free Press* (18 March 1931); *Ely Daily Times* (19 March 1931); *Tonopah Times-Bonanza* (18 March 1931); *Las Vegas Age* (19 March 1931); *Reno Evening Gazette* (19 March 1931); *Carson City Daily Appeal* (21 March 1931). Reno's *Nevada State Journal* of 19 March 1931, in an editorial comment on the gambling and divorce laws that reflected the economic reasons for their existence, offered the opinion that "Nevada is embarking on what may be termed 'legalized liberality.' It represents a theory of social and business economics that was formerly thought to be inconsistent with the best interests of the state." The legislature's action appeared to indicate, the *Journal* felt, that Nevadans now desired a "trial of open gambling and easy divorce as a means of stimulating business."

<sup>68</sup>*Carson City Daily Appeal* (19 March 1931); Earl, "The Legalization of Gambling," 39–46; *Las Vegas Age* (31 January 1932); Raymond, *George Wingfield*, 195.

# NEVADA GAMBLING JUST ANOTHER BUSINESS ENTERPRISE

Jerome E. Edwards

The hearings and deliberations of the federal Commission on the Review of the National Policy toward Gambling in Carson City and Las Vegas in August 1974 marked a major event in the evolution of Nevada's gaming industry. This little known, and little reported incident provided a defining moment in Nevada's history when its leadership was juxtaposed between fears of the past and hopes for the future. The hearings provided an opportunity to exorcise a sometimes nightmarish past with a new rhetoric of gaming, to establish an amicable relationship with the federal government, and, very importantly, to tap outside money for capital investment. Fundamentally it attempted to fit Nevada's chief industry into the main currents of America's business and development.

An amicable relationship between the state and the federal government did not always exist. In fact the image of Nevada and of its chief industry, gambling, hit a low point in the 1950s and 1960s. This resulted in a particularly tumultuous relationship between the two government entities during that period. Twice during these two decades, determined attempts were made by elements in the federal government to destroy the very existence of Nevada's economic lifeblood.

In January 1950, Senator Estes Kefauver of Tennessee tossed a bill into the United States Senate hopper to establish a special committee to investigate organized crime activities nationwide. The senate readily agreed to this, and the popularly named Kefauver Committee made a huge splash in newspapers and on newsreels as it conducted its sensationalized television hearings. The attention of the committee was focused on both illegal and legal gambling activities, with Nevada becoming a prime target. The traveling road show came to Las Vegas on November 15, 1950 for one day of hearings. They need not have bothered. Most of the senators on the committee had already made up their minds that Nevada gambling was hoodlum infested, as the

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hearing became confrontational in tone. Never changing their preconceived notions, the committee members in their final report declared, "As a case history of legalized gambling, Nevada speaks eloquently in the negative." The chief reason for this attitude, as explained by the committee, was the alleged underworld connections of important Nevada gambling owners with the "syndicates."<sup>1</sup>

To solve this perceived mob problem, the Kefauver Committee was caught in a dilemma. Although it readily acknowledged that crime, under the United States Constitution, was a local problem and something best left to state regulation, no state alone could control this national monster. Therefore, the committee called for a wider effort, spearheaded by the federal government, to control gambling and the gang influence pervading it. The United States government alone could eradicate the "interstate activities and interstate aspects of organized crime." It recommended that federal efforts against gambling had to be beefed up. Out of the climate produced by these hearings came a recommendation that a federal punitive tax be instituted on all Nevada gambling transactions, a proposal which was designed to tax the state's peculiar industry out of existence. This, of course, did not pass, partly because of the determined efforts of Nevada's powerful Senator Patrick A. McCarran.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the chief practical consequence of the Kefauver hearings was that more and more gambling owners, operating in areas where gambling was ostensibly illegal, moved their operations to Nevada, where they were protected by state law. But the idea of a national campaign by the federal government against organized crime remained alive, although during the presidency of Dwight Eisenhower little was done to assert national supremacy over this sensitive area of states rights. Then, too, in the anti-communist climate of the 1950s, more federal resources were mobilized against supposed subversives in the fight against the Soviet Union than against mob chieftains.

When John F. Kennedy became president, federal policies reverted to those recommended by the Kefauver Committee. And in the early 1960s, elements in the federal government mounted one last offensive designed to harass and destroy Nevada gambling. In part this reflected President Kennedy's belief in a gung-ho, more activist federal government when confronting such traditional local problems as crime, civil rights, or school desegregation. This was reflected in his naming his brother Robert F. Kennedy as attorney general. Robert Kennedy had become interested in organized crime and labor racketeering while working for the Senate Rackets Committee headed by Senator John McClellan of Arkansas. He was particularly fascinated by Jimmy Hoffa's activities in the International Brotherhood of Teamsters and Hoffa's ties, through the Central States Pension Fund, with Las Vegas casino owners and the Mafia. In the words of sociologist Jerome Skolnick, "Kennedy was planning to clean out what he called the 'bank of America's organized crime,' and failing that, he would press Congress to close down gambling."<sup>3</sup>

In the later view of Governor Grant Sawyer, Robert Kennedy did mean business:

In the summer of 1961 Roger Foley learned of a federal strike force that was being put together to invade every major casino in Reno and Las Vegas—the Department of Justice asked him to deputize sixty-five federal agents to carry out this big raid on Nevada gambling. I was stunned. The day after Roger told me, we got on a plane and went to Washington and I made an appointment to see the attorney general. . . . When I was shown in to see Bobby Kennedy I found him dressed for a game of tennis or something. I asked if he was planning to raid Nevada; and if so, why? We had a heated discussion, to say the least, and there was no give or compromise on his part at all. He looked at Nevada, as many people then did, as a den of iniquity . . . everybody who lived in or came to Nevada was corrupt, including me, and to clean the state up he was ready to assign a substantial force of agents to raid it. . . .

. . . It was that attitude that Bobby Kennedy projected: "You are a bunch of peasants out there, you're all sort of sleazy. We here in the East, who know all, are going to come out there and set you right, whether you like it or not." As a personal matter I was particularly offended, because I got the impression that Bobby looked upon me as someone who had just stepped out from behind a crap table; and he seemed to imply that I was connected with the mob, which really burned me up. I remember pounding the table and just feeling that I was making no progress with him at all.<sup>4</sup>

Only after he confronted the president with this, did Sawyer get the strike force countermanded. The governor felt "personally betrayed" (he had worked hard for Kennedy in 1960) and relations between the state and the federal government did not noticeably improve as long as Sawyer held office. At the same time, a negative image of Nevada, abetted by federal attitudes, was shared with a wide audience by sensational articles appearing in such magazines as *Reader's Digest*, and by books such as *The Green Felt Jungle* by Ed Reid and Ovid Demaris, and by Pulitzer Prize winner Wallace Turner's *Gamblers' Money, the New Force in American Life*.<sup>5</sup>

By 1965 the reputation of Nevada gambling seemed to be at a particularly low point. In the popular mind, the mob was a controlling influence in the state. In other ways, too, the state had cause for concern. Nevada gambling appeared to have lost some of its wild momentum of growth which it had shown during the 1950s. No major hotel had been built on the Las Vegas Strip since 1958, and the annual percentage increases in gambling revenue were slowing down. With only a 5.2 percent increase, 1965 showed the worst year of growth since 1950. In 1966, an article appeared in *The Atlantic Monthly* by Edward F. Sherman, a legal aide to Governor Grant Sawyer, entitled, "Nevada: The End of the Casino Era." Its closing words declaimed, "Nevada has embarked on the road to becoming just another American state. Difficult days are ahead for its gambling industry, and the transition pains of the post-Casino Era may be unpleasant. But the Casino Era is drawing to a close, and few Nevadans will mourn its passing."<sup>6</sup>



Governor Grant Sawyer. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

That of course was not to be the end of the story. The mid- and late-1960s demonstrated the resilient nature of Nevada gambling and the fact that whenever it confronted problems, it was in the nature of the beast to re-create and indeed to reinvent itself. The re-creation was to direct Nevada gambling much

more into line with the main currents of American society, making it much more palatable to a greater number of people.

Perhaps it was good for the future of gambling that the confrontational Sawyer, running for a third gubernatorial term in 1966, was defeated by Paul Laxalt, who was far more willing to work cooperatively with such luminaries as J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Richard Nixon's winning the presidency in 1968 also meant that the occupant of the White House would now be more sensitive to the rights of states. But ultimately it was internal change within Nevada's gambling industry which made it more palatable to more people.

When Howard Hughes arrived in Nevada in 1967, he bought in rapid succession seven major casino operations. Desperately anxious to keep him in the state, Nevada authorities waived most of its mandated investigative procedures necessary for licensure. The presence of Hughes was necessary to Nevada, declared Governor Paul Laxalt, because "he added a degree of credibility to the state that it might have taken years of advertising to secure." His own aim for Nevada, Hughes wrote in a memo to his associate Robert Maheu was "to make Las Vegas as trustworthy and respectable as the New York Stock Exchange—so that Nevada gambling will have the kind of reputation that Lloyd's of London has." Although Hughes's reputation was later tarnished by his growing madness, his presence did deflect the criticism that Las Vegas was a center for organized crime. It is also possible that his ties with the Nixon administration ameliorated federal negativism. Hughes was not a builder; he invested his money in casinos already developed, and his record as a gambling businessman was lackluster at best. Most of his properties went downhill under his control. But he did provide legitimacy and to some extent he cashed out the mob.<sup>7</sup>

Far less publicized, but eventually much more important in making Nevada gambling more respectable, was the Corporate Gaming Act of 1969 which allowed publicly traded corporations for the first time to own casinos in the state. Simply put, this is one of the very most important pieces of legislation in Nevada history, and its significance cannot be overstated. Established and respected companies like Hilton and MGM soon entered the Nevada market, and individually owned enterprises such as Harrah's went through the process of incorporation. These corporations very soon came to dominate the economic structure of the gambling industry. Outside corporations quickly discovered the wonderful profits to be made in Nevada. Over time, although it is getting ahead of our story, the arrival of corporations to the Nevada gambling scene was to create more conventional sources of financing for the industry: sources such as banks—and, eventually, the issuance of junk bonds. These corporations were listed on the New York Stock Exchange. They were discussed in the appropriate business magazines. The values, rhetoric and vocabulary of Nevada gambling and of big business capitalism no longer seemed antithetical to each other. In fact they meshed together quite comfortably.

It must also be said that after a dilatory beginning the state government of Nevada had been doing a far more effective job of policing its own peculiar industry, thus helping its vulnerable image. Effective regulation had been forced upon the state from outside, when it became obvious that the lack of it would invite a federal clampdown. In general, effective state regulation obtained the approval of the gambling owners. The State Gaming Control Board, created in 1955, closely monitored and licensed gambling activities. The board was still subsidiary to the State Tax Commission. In 1959, however, the legislature formed an independent State Gaming Control Commission. The imposition of the "black book" in the same year and the resulting notoriety of several well-publicized cases, expressed the state's determination to clamp down on the most egregious examples of infiltration by organized crime. This whole paraphernalia of regulation was also upheld by the courts, both on the state and federal level. By supervising gambling, the state promised protection against a potentially vengeful federal government and, at the same time, helped clean up its sullied image. Nevada gambling and state government thus became partners in order to survive.

All of these events serve as background to a crucial shift in federal attitudes in the decade of the 1970s. That shift in federal policy emerged with the deliberations and report of the Commission on the Review of the National Policy toward Gambling. As stated before, the deliberations and report provided a defining moment in changing federal policies. These shifting federal government views also were symptomatic of other, concurrent changes in the larger American society.

The Commission on the Review of the National Policy toward Gambling was created by congress in the Organized Crime Act of 1970. Its charge was to study all aspects of gambling in America and then to recommend policy to the states and to the federal government. The commission itself consisted of fifteen members. Nevadans were purposely brought into the process from the very beginning. Two of the commission members were from the state: the powerful United States Senator Howard Cannon and state Attorney General Robert List. For three years the commission and its staff reviewed pertinent materials on gambling.<sup>8</sup>

In August 1975, as part of its gathering of evidence, the commission met for several days in Carson City and Las Vegas to hear testimony from thirty-eight Nevada leaders, representing the worlds of gaming (the word now invariably used for gambling), business, politics, government, education, religion, and journalism. It was an ostensible cross-section of Nevada's elite. Of the thirty-eight, only Hank Greenspun, the maverick publisher of the *Las Vegas Sun*, was negative in his assessment of gambling's impact on the state and its people. His testimony was then ignored, and he was silently treated as a public embarrassment. Some of the federal government witnesses, Richard P. Crane, Jr., of the Los Angeles Strike Force, and Jack Keith, Jr., Special Agent in Charge, Federal



Bureau of Investigation, Las Vegas, said many things critical of crime and gambling in Nevada; but they couched their criticism in terms acceptable to the committee ("Nevada was well on its way to solving these problems"). Otherwise there was virtual unanimity from the witnesses as to gambling's many benefits for Nevada.<sup>9</sup>

Twenty-four years before, the Kefauver Committee had been irascible and confrontational; by contrast the Commission on the Review of the National Policy toward Gambling was most cooperative, and the general atmosphere could not have been cozier. Many points were constantly reiterated, as if there had been a previous collusion of testimony—or perhaps everyone simply shared the same values and outlook. No controversial casino owner, tainted to the slightest degree by a shady past, was invited to the hearings. The older generation was represented by William Harrah, rather than by Benny Binion or Moe Dahlitiz. In the younger generation, invited were emergent owners such as John Ascuagua, Steve Wynn, and some smooth corporate types, rather than wheeler-dealers such as Alan Glick. It did not matter; the commission had already made up its collective mind before a particle of public testimony had been taken. As Chairman Charles H. Morin indicated in his opening comments:

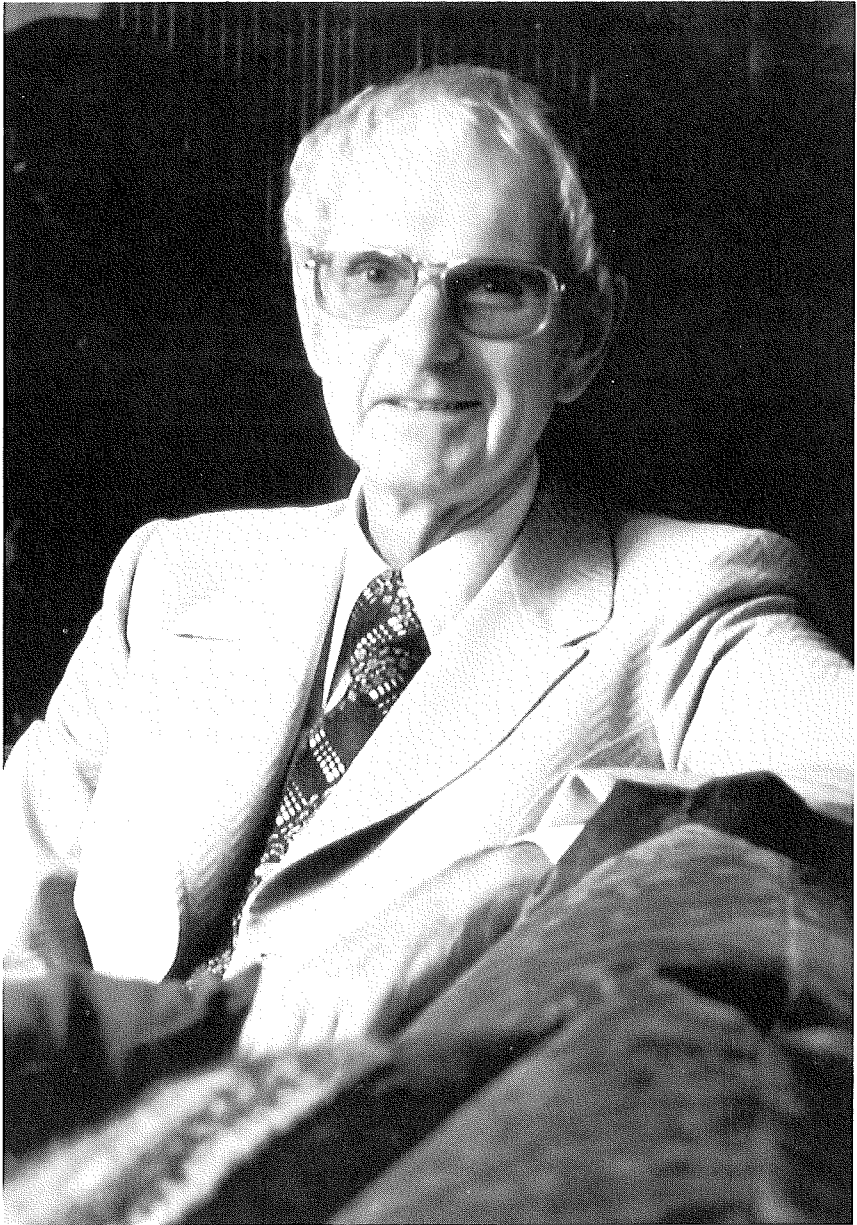
We are also here, and I think it is good for the record to show, that we are aware and we respect the fact that public gaming here in the state of Nevada is considered as a legitimate and desirable form of recreation. This decision had been made by the State of Nevada, and we certainly respect that decision.

We know and we are here to have the record show that it is being conducted by professional and dedicated reputable management and under the most pervasive and responsible State regulation.

Let me say that our staff here in Nevada has encountered the warmest and the most ready cooperation from everyone here, the casino owners, operators, regulators, participants. It has been a very rewarding experience and the professional way in which we are being treated here now is most impressive to all of us.<sup>10</sup>

The ensuing testimony produced a common rhetoric which was designed to fit Nevada's gambling experience into American norms. This rhetoric echoed, and presaged, an important national shift in attitudes toward what was a phenomenon previously considered outside normal, or respectable, behavior. The chosen vocabulary deliberately attempted to mesh gaming (the word invariably used) with conventionality, normality, and respectability.

Nowhere was this more apparent than in the attempt to make Nevada gaming appear as just another business enterprise. The words used were designed to align gaming with the larger values of American capitalism. As John Ascuagua of the Nugget in Sparks said, "I consider myself a businessman and I don't really consider myself a gambler." Before starting out he had never realized how "this business would demand the know-how of, well, public relations, cost accounting, advertising, food and bar restaurant management, hotel operation and



William F. Harrah in 1977. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

entertainment." The same principles which worked in business would also apply to gaming, or at least so felt William Harrah of Reno: "I believe that the same practices, ethics, principles which make any business successful would work for gambling as well." John Petit, Director of Research and Planning for Summa Corporation, argued much the same thing: "As a matter of fact we have pretty

much come to the conclusion that it doesn't matter what you manage, that the problem is the same. You could be managing a church or a casino, the principles are the same." Gambling, just like any other business, could provide a life-long vocation, a career to be sought for by talented young people. As Harrah informed the committee: "Today Harrah's has sixty-four hundred employees, many of them college students who came to work for us during summer vacations and who returned later to seek careers. I realize a 'career in gaming' may sound unusual even to you gentlemen, but most of the industry's management is made of careerists. Harrah's itself has forty-two separate and distinct departments."<sup>11</sup>

The tendency was to downplay the differences between Nevada gambling from American business and to highlight the similarities. Of particular concern was the ability to secure a valid audit of a typical gambling casino. Could professional auditors detect any possible stealing, skimming, tax fraud or whatever else that criminal elements might devise? According to Saul Leonard of the accounting firm of Laventhol and Horwath, all state controls were absolutely foolproof in this regard; the accounting process for a gambling casino was really no different than that for a grocery store.<sup>12</sup>

Nevada leaders, supported by the commission, also made the major point, as Senator Howard Cannon put it, that Nevada gambling was just another facet of a rapidly expanding tourist and recreation industry. Just as Nevada's spokesmen were plugging into the vocabulary of business, they were doing the same with the terminology of leisure-time activities. Harrah saw that he, along with other casino owners, had created a "sophisticated, adult Disneyland that no other state can duplicate." Indeed, gambling, like other recreational activities, was to be positively encouraged. Commission Chairman Charles H. Morin showed his own bias by stating that, "this Commission respects the fact that the state of Nevada had made a determination that gambling is a form of relaxation and recreation which is to be encouraged." R. J. Taylor, President of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, chimed in that "for many visitors we believe that Las Vegas is a therapeutic recreational experience, a twenty-four-hour fun place where they can lose track of time. We believe that this is a healthy experience." And above all, Nevada gambling delivered a positive recreational product, and people were satisfied with it. As Ken O'Connell, Executive Director of the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce alleged, "In my seventeen years in the Chamber, we receive between 500 and 700 letters a day and I have no letter in my file ever complaining about anyone who has ever gambled in Las Vegas who felt that they had been ripped off or anything."<sup>13</sup>

Much of the traditional opposition to gambling had come from certain churches, particularly conservative and fundamentalist Protestant denominations which had taught that gambling, if not a sin, was a complete waste of time. But Jerome Blankenship, a Methodist minister and a representative of a sect which had in the past been antigambling, assured the commission that although

the Bible was occasionally negative on gambling, the references were really too few "to make a conclusion. There is absolutely no prohibition." Assuaging any possible commission fears that organized religion would cause any problems, Blankenship argued in fact that gambling helped foster religion, at least in Nevada:

Our congregation received a \$2,000 gift from one of the casinos just because they liked us, I guess. I don't know. We didn't do anything, didn't ask for it.

One day in the mail they said, "Merry Christmas. 2000."

In addition many churches have been built by donation of casinos; most recently the campus ministry building adjacent to the University of Las Vegas received over \$2,000 in donations, most of them from various casino complexes.

I think by and large the casinos have been very generous to the community, not just the churches but the community interests at large. At least that has been my experience.<sup>14</sup>

The irrepressible R. J. Taylor proudly declared how devout the people of Las Vegas were. Obviously gambling had not had a deleterious effect on their religious faith. "We have, for example, nearly 150 churches, making Las Vegas the city with the largest number of churches per capita in the nation." Several other witnesses made exactly the same assertion.<sup>15</sup>

According to this point of view, Las Vegas was a thoroughly ordinary city. Effort was made to stress the normality of everyday existence for people in a gambling environment, and how easily they fit into the larger American culture. As Mayor Bill Briare of Las Vegas put it:

The people who are working in the gaming business are people, for those who don't realize what great people we have living here in Las Vegas, are just common everyday men and women who have families, they raise their children, they put them in one of the finest school districts in the United States to attend classes that have educators who are qualified and taken from all parts of the country. They go to church on Saturday or Sundays, depending on their religious beliefs. They go to grocery stores.<sup>16</sup>

It all seemed rather dull in its conventionality. Frank Scott pointed out how "[Clark] County's permanent residents tend to be very stable and basically conservative and exert very strict community standards." If anything, regulated gambling "helped" a society be more stable, or so assured Clark County School District Superintendent of Schools, Kenny C. Guinn.<sup>17</sup>

Probably the most often voiced criticism of gambling as it was practiced in Nevada, and certainly the one thing which could have brought down on it the full fury of federal wrath, was its susceptibility to inroads by organized crime. The commission hearings attacked this issue dead on. Any alleged mobster influences in Nevada were relegated to some dim, dusky day in the very distant past. Because of the state's stringent regulatory procedure, mob influence was nonexistent, or so went the official line. The seamier side of Nevada's chief industry was forgotten, or when remembered, romanticized. Senator Cannon:

"We have come a long way since the days of the Kefauver investigation and the justifiable preoccupation with the sinister, illegal and destructive aspects of gambling that were endlessly publicized and romanticized in the thirties, the forties, and the fifties." Harrah announced that the closest he had "ever come to the Mafia was in the audience of the *Godfather*." Paul Laxalt, however, placed a later



Paul Laxalt, Governor and United States Senator. (*Nevada Historical Society*)

date on the mobster exit from Nevada than did the others; according to him it occurred during his tenure as governor.<sup>18</sup>

In summary, the commission hearings, with the connivance of selected (or rather preselected) leaders of Nevada, attempted to fit the state of Nevada and its institution into a larger American mainstream. What was going on in Nevada was emblematic of what was going on in the greater society. If, in the past, Nevada had seemed aberrant in its legislated industries, those institutions were now to be fitted, at least for rhetorical purposes, into the business, corporate, recreational, and even religious currents of the nation. One writes rhetorical, but the sentiments were certainly heartfelt.

The portrayal of gambling and of its effects was certainly an exceptionally rosy one. Why was there such a need to harp on gambling's positive attributes? The answer to this is two-fold in nature. First, and most obvious, the state wished to counter any possibility of federal intervention to close gambling down, or even to regulate it. The animosity expressed by the Kefauver committee and the Robert Kennedy vendetta against Las Vegas was to be relegated permanently to past memories. But a rosy picture also was demanded for other, perhaps less obvious, but nonetheless quite important reasons. For the nature of gambling had changed over the years, and, with the introduction of corporate gaming in 1969, it was more than ever dependent *for business reasons* on a positive image from outside the state. Corporate ownership needed large infusions of capital for construction. If banks and insurance companies, notoriously cautious and fearful of "imprudent" investments, continued to be miserly with construction loans, the industry would suffer continued capital strangulation. Hence came the need for a better image for business, for corporate America.

William H. McElnea, Jr., President of Caesars World, Incorporated, related how his company had attempted to finance a very large new hotel over the previous two years, which would have cost some \$150,000,000, and how this had failed. The major reason "was that we were attempting to create this investment in Las Vegas." Mention the city's name, and outside banks and insurance companies were still unwilling to turn on the spigot.

*ATTORNEY GENERAL LIST:* In other words, the insurance companies in particular place a priority or rather placed a higher degree of their money in industries which perhaps have a smaller return on investment or of the so-called image of Las Vegas.

*MR. McELNEA:* Again a lack of understanding really of what constitutes the modern Las Vegas and really another lack of understanding of how hotel/casinos operate. I think, as I said earlier, this is something that over a period of time will be dispelled.

*ATTORNEY GENERAL LIST:* It is an educational process really that we have to go through.

*MR. McELNEA:* Yes, it is.<sup>19</sup>

The commissioners ate most of this up. In its final report, issued in 1976, this official federal government commission insisted that states, not the federal gov-

ernment should "have the primary responsibility for determining what forms of gambling may legally take place within their borders." Regulation of gambling, therefore, should be a matter of states' rights rather than national rights. This recommendation marks a major turning away, by the federal bureaucracy, from the Kennedy-type activism that had previously so endangered Nevada gambling activities. The commission also reported that Nevada regulation was a paragon of state policing, indeed it recommended that "states which choose to legalize casino gambling should first turn for guidance to the legal framework established in Nevada." Elsewhere in the final report, the commission remarked that, for the most part, the "folklore" of the Mafia's involvement in Nevada was "based as much on conjecture and assumption as on historical fact and current reality."<sup>20</sup>

The commission report came out just at the right time—just a few years before the downfall of Alan Glick, the Rosenthal case, and the murder of Tony Spilotro all raised once again troubling questions of the involvement of organized crime in Nevada. The commission report suited perfectly the increasingly conservative, non-interventionist tendencies of the Nixon and Ford administrations, and marked the end of any effective federal government interference in Nevada's chief industry, an interference obviously not to be resurrected in the "go-go" spirit of the Reagan years. By aligning itself so effectively with larger American values and themes, Nevada's gambling has probably laid to rest permanently the specter of undue federal interference, and, at the same time, made itself far more attractive to the wider business community and to outside investment. Still, perhaps, it is unwise to apply the term "permanent" to the dynamics of history and society, especially relating to questions about the federal-state balance in the United States.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Jerome E. Edwards, *Pat McCarran, Political Boss of Nevada* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1982), 149; U.S. Senate, Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime, *Third Interim Report*. 82nd Congress, 1st Session, S. Rep. 307 (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O. 6. P.O., 1951), 94.

<sup>2</sup>Sidney Shalett, ed., *Crime in America, by Estes Kefauver* (Garden City, N.Y. Doubleday & Company, Inc. 1951), 229–237; U.S. Senate, Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime, *Third Interim Report*, 94.

<sup>3</sup>See Jerome H. Skolnick, *House of Cards, The Legalization and Control of Casino Gambling* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1978), 124–125.

<sup>4</sup>Grant Sawyer, *Hang Tough! Grant Sawyer: an Activist in the Governor's Mansion*: from oral history interviews conducted by Gary E. Elliott, narrative composed by R. T. King (Reno: University of Nevada Oral History Program, 1993) 89–90, 91.

<sup>5</sup>Sawyer, 91.

<sup>6</sup>Edward F. Sherman, "Nevada: The End of the Casino Era," *The Atlantic Monthly*, 218 (October, 1966) 116; Russell R. Elliott, with the assistance of William D. Rowley, *History of Nevada*, 2nd ed., rev. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1987), 408.

<sup>7</sup>Donald L. Bartlett and James B. Steele, *Empire, The Life, Legend, and Madness of Howard Hughes* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1979) 305; Michael Drosnin, *Citizen Hughes* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1985), 108.

<sup>8</sup>United States Commission on the Review of the National Policy Toward Gambling, "Transcript of Proceedings, The Nevada National Hearing" (three typed volumes, unpublished, xeroxed.) Hearings: I, 2-3. Hereafter these volumes will be referred to as "The Nevada National Hearings."

<sup>9</sup>"The Nevada National Hearings," *passim*.

<sup>10</sup>"The Nevada National Hearings," I, 4.

<sup>11</sup>"The Nevada National Hearings," I, 140, 142, 152, 153; II, 572.

<sup>12</sup>"The Nevada National Hearings," II, 392.

<sup>13</sup>"The Nevada National Hearings," I, 7, 154, 222; I, 5, 49-50, Second Series.

<sup>14</sup>"The Nevada National Hearings," I, 187-88, 200.

<sup>15</sup>"The Nevada National Hearings," I, 39, Second Series.

<sup>16</sup>"The Nevada National Hearings," I, 16, Second Series.

<sup>17</sup>"The Nevada National Hearings," I, 187, 229, Second Series.

<sup>18</sup>"The Nevada National Hearings," I, 7, 156; I, 123-124, Second Series.

<sup>19</sup>"The Nevada National Hearings," I, 148-149, Second Series.

<sup>20</sup>U.S. Commission on the Review of the National Policy toward Gambling, *Gambling in America, Final Report*, pp. 182-183.



# NEVADA WELFARE ASSISTANCE CASELOADS AND GAMING A Cautionary Tale

Diane E. Nassir

Las Vegas at the end of the twentieth century is perhaps best understood when viewed within the post-modernist context of an architectural revolt against the sterility and de-humanizing elements of modernism.<sup>1</sup> Recently in Las Vegas this revolt has manifested itself in the fantastical architecture of several mega-resorts rising from the southern Nevada desert floor. Two billion dollars has been invested in three hotels that opened at the end of 1993. The Hotel Luxor assumes the shape of a pyramid 30-stories high, embracing 29 million cubic feet of space. Hotel guests may circumnavigate the interior aboard floating gondolas moving along a miniature Nile.<sup>2</sup> The MGM's Grand Hotel and Theme Park lures visitors into the Land of Oz through a multi-story lion's head. At 5,005 rooms, it is the largest resort hotel and largest hotel casino in the world.<sup>3</sup> Steve Wynn, owner of the Mirage which opened in late 1989 and features a volcano erupting every hour on the hour, bottle-nosed dolphins, and white tigers, has just opened the Treasure Island with its nightly battles between a full-sized British man-of-war and a pirate ship complete with roaring cannons.<sup>4</sup>

Post-modern economies in the Western world are partially characterized by a progressive decline in industrialization. This has many effects, one of which is the bifurcation of labor into a small core of educated workers and a large mass of unqualified, marginalized people for whom employment becomes tenuous.<sup>5</sup> In this way, just as California portends America's future demographically, Nevada serves as an economic window onto the United States of the next century in regard to ever widening divisions in the labor force.<sup>6</sup>

Nevada has never enjoyed a true industrial period. Still lacking significant

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numbers of industrial jobs at the end of the twentieth century, Nevada leads the country in service employment.<sup>7</sup> With an economy driven by tourism, the emphasis is on service jobs which are low in wages, marginal in benefits and always vulnerable to seasonal layoffs.

The wedding of gaming to theme parks by the late twentieth century has assured Nevada a premier position in the post-modern global tourist economy. This has not been achieved without certain social costs. One of these costs is an increase in the demand for welfare assistance to shore up the weaknesses of a service-oriented economy. The abundance of low-wage, easily accessible service jobs in the casino industry, many of which require little education, skill or experience, may spell profits for some, but dooms others to disaster.<sup>8</sup> As the pool of low-wage casino jobs increases, the number of people at-risk for welfare assistance also rises. Public dollars become the only safety net that many of these employees have when inevitable lay-offs occur.

Within the context of the 1990 recession and its sluggish recovery, other state and local governments viewed gaming revenues as a promise for prosperity. Currently some form of gaming legally exists in forty-eight states; casino gambling is allowed in fourteen states; there are as many as forty floating casinos<sup>9</sup> and sixty-five casinos on Indian reservations.<sup>10</sup> The public spent over 11 billion dollars on gambling last year nationwide.<sup>11</sup> Acceptance of gaming on a wide scale in American society owes its origins in part to the proliferation of state lotteries in the 1980s<sup>12</sup> which were packaged and sold to the voters partly on the notion that they would serve as a rich revenue stream for public education. Ironically, some also point to the rise in church bingo games as a trend promoting the acceptance of gambling.<sup>13</sup>

Ubiquitous state lotteries linked gambling to the public good, that is, public education, and in the process, assisted in the transformation of American attitudes toward gaming. Given the nature of the nation's demographic trends, the link of gaming to theme parks was the logical next step, as such parks shaped the notions of entertainment and recreation for much of America's population born in the Disneyland era. No longer limited to narrow gaming profits, Las Vegas seeks much more of the family recreational dollar.<sup>14</sup> The economic success of this vision is necessarily driven by the consumer-oriented expectations<sup>15</sup> of America's burgeoning population<sup>16</sup> and the world.<sup>17</sup>

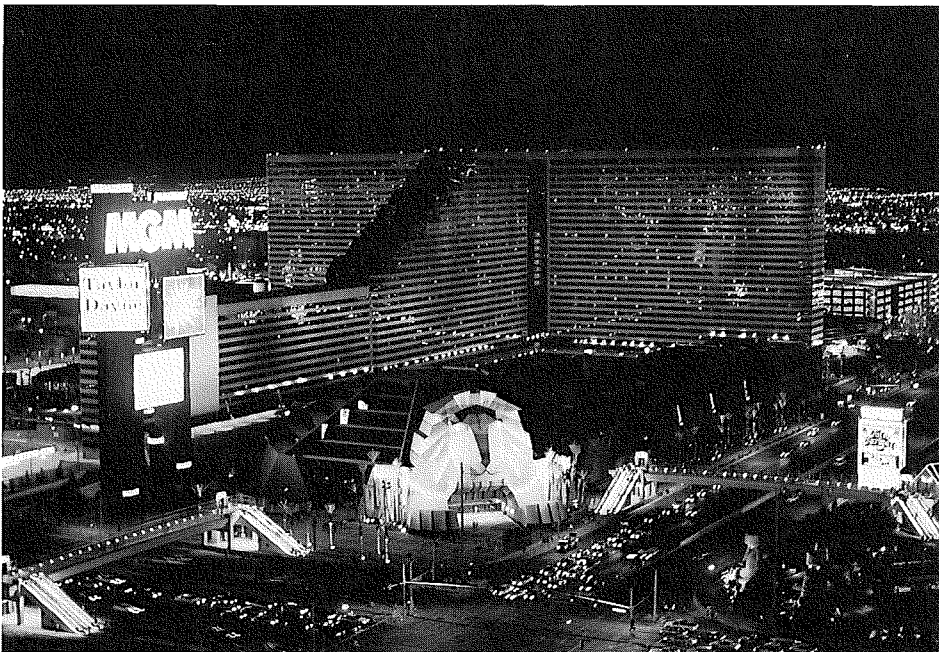
The post-war export of American popular culture, with its attendant emphasis on extending childhood's sense of freedom from responsibility into adolescence and beyond, was facilitated by Hollywood movies and rock 'n roll, that is, the popular culture itself. It was accelerated by the medium of television.<sup>18</sup> These cultural currents in turn stimulated a mass-based world-wide market.

With imagination, vision, and borrowings from Walt Disney, the Nevada casino industry has capitalized on the convergence of social, cultural, economic and technological forces to serve both the domestic and the international markets. Las Vegas, "the meadows," a mid-nineteenth century Mormon station

carved out of the eastern edge of the Mojave Desert, became by the late twentieth century a looking glass into America's post-modern future.

Not all agree, however, that ever-increasing gaming revenues and rising employment levels in the casino industry will enhance the public coffers, boost flagging consumer confidence or create *desirable* employment.<sup>19</sup> Among other things, *desirable* employment means adequate wage levels that allow for the purchase of the goods and services that fuel the growth of corporate capitalism. The casino industry is a labor-intensive industry with many low-wage, low-skilled jobs. The large number of jobs available serves as a magnet for job seekers from outside as well as inside the state,<sup>20</sup> driving up both population and unemployment,<sup>21</sup> and increasing the need for additional housing, roads, schools, hospitals, police, fire protection and welfare assistance. When the inevitable lay-offs occur in the industry, public assistance becomes the only safety net available for many casino workers.

Gambling existed legally in territorial Nevada, although moral reformers constantly agitated for its prohibition.<sup>22</sup> They were finally successful in 1910 when the Progressive movement in Nevada succeeded in bringing an end to gaming in all forms. However enforcement became less and less effective.<sup>23</sup> Nevada's modern era of legalized gambling began in 1931 when the "wide open gambling" bill was signed by Governor Fred Balzar.<sup>24</sup> Major factors for the re-



The MGM Grand Hotel and Theme Park on the Las Vegas Strip is the largest resort hotel in the world with 5,005 rooms and a 33-acre Hollywood-image theme park. (*Las Vegas News Bureau*)

emergence of legalized gambling were not only the desire to enhance business which had suffered during the Great Depression, but to offer a new source of taxation for local governments.<sup>25</sup>

Tax relief for the wealthy became the cornerstone of the powerful Nevada economic doctrine known as "One Sound State,"<sup>26</sup> whose preeminent exponent was Norman Biltz, a real estate promoter of Lake Tahoe and Nevada ranch lands.<sup>27</sup> Beginning in 1925 with the repeal of the inheritance tax and continuing for over a decade and a half with the limitation of taxes on personal property and real estate, Nevada became the least-taxed state in the nation. Nevada did not have an income tax, a gift tax, an inheritance tax or a tax on intangibles.<sup>28</sup> Where other states increased taxes in order to pay for desperately needed public services during the New Deal, the policy of "One Sound State" took Nevada in the opposite direction, making Nevada an attractive place for the wealthy but providing little for the needy. Biltz came to be known as the "Duke of Nevada" as he sold vast tracts of land to the expatriate well-to-do to legitimize their residency. The principles of "One Sound State" with its lower taxes also appealed to those of more common means, but meant social services in education, welfare and pension systems were less available.<sup>29</sup>

Advocates of "One Sound State" later in the 1950s endorsed the movement toward the sales tax as a vital component of the doctrine. Biltz worked for the sales tax "for the reason that due to the number of tourists that go through the state of Nevada, about seventy percent of that tax was paid by outsiders." At the same time, influential, wealthy citizens like Biltz could see taxes on gaming revenues as "an easy method to shift the tax burden off themselves and onto wagers."<sup>30</sup> The process, of course, is a regressive method of taxation, placing the poor at great risk in a society ill-equipped to aid them.

The historic roots of poor laws and the approach to dealing with the needy in America can be found in Elizabethan England where responsibility for the poor was assumed at the parish level. Towns in colonial America assumed responsibility for the needy. Relief came from families, private charities and a poor tax. The emphasis on local responsibility remained until the twentieth century. Increasingly throughout the nineteenth century private charitable institutions became involved with the social problems of the needy, the mentally ill and prison inmates. The beginning of the twentieth century marked the first national programs based on the experience of state, local and charitable organizations.

In Nevada the history of public assistance dates to territorial legislation of 1861, "An Act Relating to the Support of the Poor," which vested the county commissioners of the several counties with the superintendence of the poor in their respective counties.<sup>31</sup> A pauper was, by this law, to be supported by the immediate family. If such family existed but did not assume their responsibilities, they were required to pay \$30 per month to the county for the support of the poor. If a person were impoverished due to "intemperance, or other bad

conduct," he or she would not be entitled to any support from relatives other than parents or children. Failing any immediate family or family with sufficient means, the county assumed responsibility, with funds drawn from the county treasury.

Minors under the charge of the county were to be apprenticed to "some respectable householder of the county." Nonresidents and persons not defined as paupers but without money or property were to be provided with board, nursing, medical aid, and burial if necessary, in just amounts as deemed by the county commissioners. Paupers were eligible for county relief if they had been a resident of the county for at least six months.

This act gave the county commissioners the legal authority to build "work-houses" for the accommodation and employment of the paupers under their charge. Anyone who knowingly brought and left a pauper in any county would be fined one hundred dollars per offense. Such an offense was a misdemeanor; the state could exact both a fine and imprisonment as penalty.

The act charged the counties with the responsibility of supporting "all pauper, incompetent, poor, indigent persons and those incapacitated by age, disease, or accident, lawfully resident therein," in the absence of support by their own means, by family, or by state and private hospitals and institutions.<sup>32</sup>

The care of the needy in Nevada descends in an unbroken line from this legislation, which was not supplanted until the passage of the county Old-Age Pension Act of 1925, which was in turn supplanted by the compulsory old-age assistance to the needy aged passed by the 1937 state legislature.<sup>33</sup> To make the state eligible for federal funds, that part of the state constitution which made the counties responsible for indigent Nevadans was removed. This was in response to increasing federal responsibility to the indigent poor under Franklin Roosevelt's broad New Deal reforms in the Great Depression. The Social Security Act of 1935 contravened the historic principle of state, local and private responsibility for welfare. However, there was little opposition as the new federal-state welfare alliance made federal funds available to states on a matching basis.

SSA legislation is enabling, not mandatory. The decision to operate the program lies with the states and is done so under state law but, as per federal regulations, under a single state agency with a statewide plan approved by the federal government. Eligibility criteria and assistance levels lie with the states only to a degree. Federal funding is open-ended, allowing for automatic expansion due to increases in caseload growth, rising benefit levels and new programs.<sup>34</sup> State assistance in Nevada is categorical; that is, there is no provision for general relief to needy people who do not fit into the various categories of the approved state plan. (Some county services are available for the non-categorically needy.)

The first program in Nevada under the SSA began in 1937 with assistance to the needy aged and was not without controversy. Nevadans wanted only Ne-



A full-blown sea battle between a pirate ship and a British frigate explodes into action hourly in the late afternoon at the entrance of the 2,900-room Treasure Island Resort. (*Las Vegas News Bureau*)

vada residents to be employed by the old-age pension bureau. However, none qualified according to the federal requirements. Key Pittman, United States Senator from Nevada, intervened and expedited the approval of the state plan with the qualification that only Nevadans would obtain the jobs within Nevada.<sup>35</sup>

A "corps of trained [federal] workers [was sent from San Francisco] . . . to conduct a school of instruction for a short time for the Nevada employees." The staff of the state welfare board was to consist of a director and eight assistants, which, within one week, became eighteen.<sup>36</sup> Fear and loathing for the welfare bureaucracy was immediate. Nevadans expressed hope that as soon as the state board investigated the initial 2000 applications, the number of caseworkers could be reduced.<sup>37</sup>

State Senator Will Cobb of Storey County, who supported the idea of such assistance, attacked the old-age pension bill as being "too severe." He said that some needy Nevadans in Virginia City would not be eligible under the federal requirements. Additionally, Senator Cobb wanted eligibility to be determined by the county commissioners, who best knew their residents, as opposed to the federally-required state board. The pension was to be \$30 per month per eligible with \$15 provided by the federal government and matched by the state. In order

to circumvent the federal requirements, Cobb suggested that the state not be tied to the federal dollars; the \$15 difference, he went on, could be made up by doing away with the federally-mandated state board and caseworkers. Cobb was a supporter of the Townsend Plan put forth in California but criticized it as being overly generous by asking for \$200 monthly for elderly persons. Cobb believed that \$50 was sufficient.<sup>38</sup> The Townshend Plan and "One Sound State" were two of the prevailing notions on taxation and public assistance in the 1920s and 1930s competing with Roosevelt's New Deal.

By 1947, Nevada was the only state in the union without an Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program (AFDC),<sup>39</sup> and did not adopt the program until 1955.<sup>40</sup> Bills to establish this program had been introduced every session of the legislature since 1937.<sup>41</sup> Later federal programs were adopted in a more timely fashion. Nevada established the Food Stamp program in 1973-1974, Disabled program in 1974, Child Support Enforcement (CSE) in 1975 and the Child Health Assurance Program (CHAP) in 1985.<sup>42</sup>

Welfare reform has a high profile in the public's mind and has always been controversial in the United States. Each epoch has a point of view particular to the time. In Nevada and the nation, welfare reform came under public scrutiny in the 1960s during President Johnson's War on Poverty in the hopes that greater aid could be provided to the needy.<sup>43</sup>

Currently, the phrase "welfare reform" applies to the AFDC cash grant assistance program and was made part of President Clinton's platform during the 1992 presidential election. At present, welfare reform is aimed at curbing perceived abuses by recipients and successfully moving recipients from the welfare rolls to the employment rolls. By 1993-1994, various states became engaged in receiving federal waivers to their state plans to experiment with such ideas as limiting cash grant assistance to two years, declining further assistance to children conceived after assistance was approved and facilitating the successful training of recipients to acquire and keep jobs. Included in these proposals are job training, transportation, transitional medical coverage, child care and more successful child support enforcement.

By the mid-1980s, the Nevada State Welfare Division (NSWD) was looking for a more sophisticated way to project caseloads than the simple estimates then being used. In December 1986 NSWd staff developed simple and multiple linear regression models.<sup>44</sup> At the time, Nevada was one of only a handful of states which used multiple regression to project AFDC. The NSWd AFDC model was built upon the work of those on the cutting edge of AFDC model development.<sup>45</sup>

Prior to the fall of 1989, NSWd analysts had never successfully developed an employment variable. Nevada "employment" and "unemployment" were tried but with no success when the models were originally developed in late 1986. In summer of 1988, an attempt was made again and the variables still did not work.

At that time, based on the knowledge that California has always played a major role in Nevada life, the employment and unemployment rates for California were also used; again, without success.

In the summer of 1989, the author successfully developed an employment variable from the subcategory "Hotels, gaming and recreation" (HGR), of Nevada's service category within industrial-based employment. Employers in this category include hotels, motels, campgrounds, other lodging places and such amusement and recreation services as casinos. This variable was immediately incorporated into the AFDC Basic, CHAP and Food Stamp models. Eventually HGR was also added to the Disabled and AFDC-UP models.

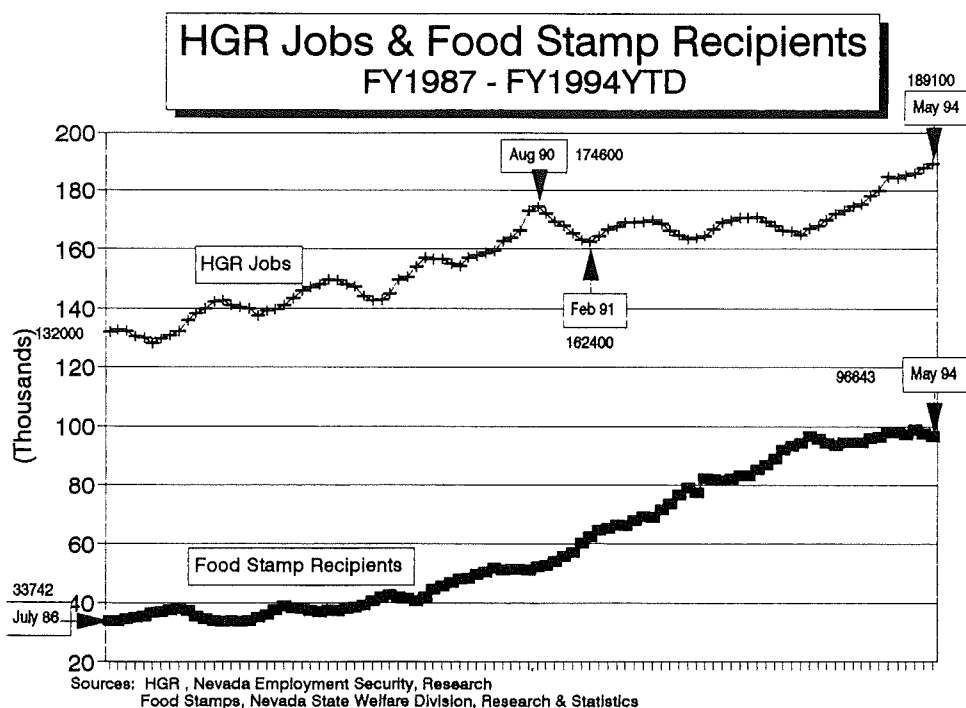
In all models, HGR has an inverse relationship to the caseload, which is conventional for an employment variable in welfare assistance models. As employment in HGR decreases, as it does seasonally, as well as due to acts of nature, acts or threats of war and recessions, NSWDC caseload rises faster. Whereas other states experience a decline in caseload during economic expansion, Nevada's HGR employment and caseload both rise over the long run. Nevada led the nation in the number of newly created jobs between 1988 and 1990.<sup>46</sup> Nevada's caseload also rose dramatically. This phenomenon directly contravened conventional wisdom and the national experience.<sup>47</sup>

Why does this happen? Conventionally, trend lines for expanded employment and welfare caseload should cross instead of rise together as they do in Nevada. While Nevada's models attest to this statistically, graphing change over time for HGR jobs and Food Stamp recipients demonstrates this visually.

The number of Food Stamp recipients is a good example to demonstrate this relationship as this program is the only assistance program with universal standards of eligibility for the forty-eight contiguous states. The average monthly benefit per person becomes a useful index to the economic well-being of states within a comparative context. When states are ranked by this benefit in descending order, Nevada Food Stamp recipients ranked highest from federal fiscal year (FFY) 1988 through FFY1992 with the exception of FFY1990 (Nevada was second to Illinois). The average monthly benefit per person in Nevada ranged from \$58.79 to \$77.63 over that span of years. Nevada's number one ranking demonstrates the fact that Nevada's recipients exhibit greater need and have fewer resources than those in the rest of the forty-eight contiguous states.<sup>48</sup> As graphed, it is evident that the number of Food Stamp recipients rises as HGR jobs increase in number.

In asking why, it becomes apparent that the relationship exists because of the nature of economic expansion in Nevada. Growth in the number of jobs alone does not ensure a drop in welfare assistance. In fact, expansion of certain jobs will lead to greater overall social problems, including a rise in welfare assistance. Nevada's high per capita income, twelfth highest nationally in 1992,<sup>49</sup> and eleventh in 1993,<sup>50</sup> is reflective of the peculiarities of Nevada's employment and population profile rather than overall economic well-being.<sup>51</sup> To show the in-

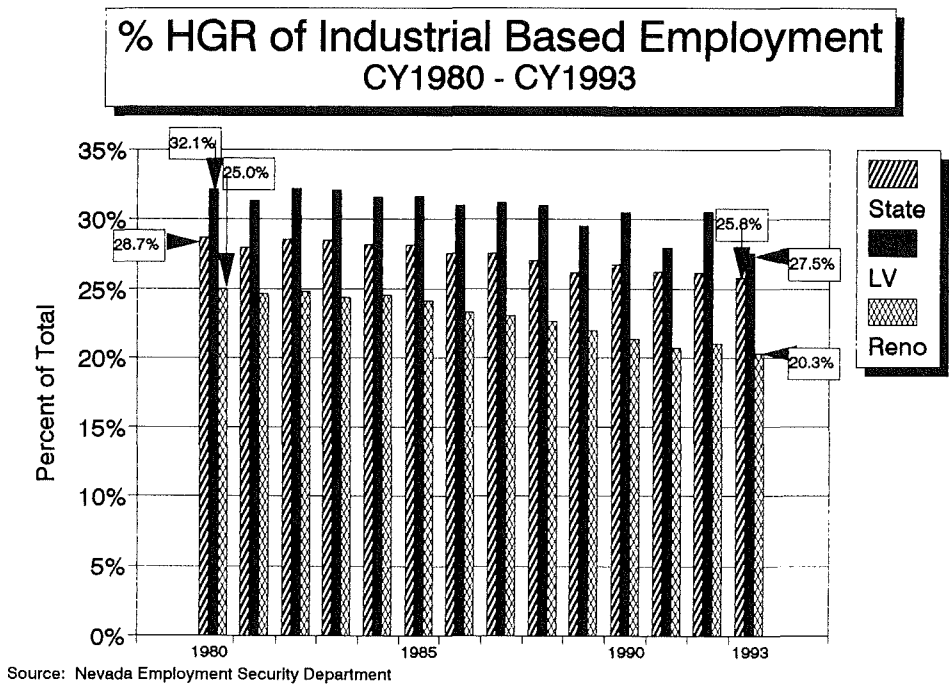




herent danger in using per capita income as an indicator of economic health, Nevada's poverty rate rose well over 40 percent from 1990 to 1992.<sup>52</sup> Another indicator of Nevada's accelerating decline in economic and social well-being is found in the fact that by 1992 Nevada led the nation in the percentage of its population not covered by health insurance at 22.7 percent, compared to a ranking of 11th in 1990 with 16.5 percent uninsured.<sup>53</sup>

Nevada has been the fastest growing state in terms of population in the nation for the last three decades and will continue to be so to the end of the century. As the tourism economy expands, HGR jobs expand. They have remained a fairly constant 30 percent of all Clark County industrial jobs throughout the 1980s, dropping to 27.5 percent in 1993. Over time the total number of HGR has increased. The more jobs there are in this category, the more people there will be who are at risk for becoming welfare recipients when employment drops.

To a degree, the nature of Nevada's economic growth drives the nature of its population growth. As long as the nature of the economy remains unchanged in Nevada, NSWDC caseload will continue to grow in good and in poor times. Most of the jobs in the HGR subcategory need little education, skills or experience. Lacking higher education and higher level job skills can put low-end wage earners at great risk when the economic thermometer fluctuates downward. Those with diminished skills and resources are less resilient and are then forced to seek out public assistance earlier in a down turn.



The HGR subcategory of the service category, which comprises all employees within hotels, motels, amusement and recreation businesses is larger than any other single employment category in Nevada. Compounding the situation is the fact that the jobs are often low-wage, seasonal and marginal in benefits.<sup>54</sup> As a result Nevada's industrial-based employment (non-agricultural) profile is unique among the nine western states. In 1993, over 44 percent of all jobs in Nevada's industrial based employment were in the category of service industries.<sup>55</sup> This is the highest percentage for the nine western states which include Alaska, Arizona, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Utah and Washington. The other states ranged from a low of 21 percent in Idaho and 22 percent in Alaska to a high of 30 percent in Hawaii, a state as highly dependent on tourism as is Nevada. When compared to the national average of almost 27.6 percent, Nevada's 44 percent ranks high as well.<sup>56</sup> HGR jobs accounted for 29 percent of all jobs statewide in calendar year (CY) 1980 and 26 percent in CY1993.<sup>57</sup> By March 1994, HGR jobs accounted for 26.5 percent of all statewide jobs and 29 percent in Clark County.<sup>58</sup> The 1993 proportions include the approximately 10,000 newly created HGR jobs from the three Las Vegas mega-resorts opened at the end of 1993.

Economic growth with equity<sup>59</sup> is a key to social, economic and political stability for Nevada and for the nation as a whole. The marginal nature of the jobs in such a large strata as HGR tends to mitigate against equitable economic

growth in Nevada. Nationally, the rate of the working poor increased in the last decade. According to the Census Bureau, 19 percent of workers earned a low wage in 1979, compared to 26 percent in 1990,<sup>60</sup> and this increase cut across demographic lines. Among low wage earners with some college training, the numbers increased from 6 percent in 1979 to 11 percent in 1990. Low earners are typically young, unmarried, female and African-American or Hispanic.<sup>61</sup> Due to the nature of the typical profile, single female-headed families are hit hardest by low wage earnings.<sup>62</sup> They are most at risk for needing public assistance. In Nevada, women conform to the low-wage pattern and occupy only 1 percent to 7 percent of the jobs in such trades as plumbers, carpenters, electricians, and mechanics; slightly more than 34 percent of the managerial class; and 90 percent or more of the hairdressers, telephone operators, receptionists, typists and secretaries.<sup>63</sup>

The rate of single-parent families, over 85 percent of which are headed by females,<sup>64</sup> increased over the last decade from 19 percent to 22 percent.<sup>65</sup> According to the 1990 U.S. Census, 44.5 percent of all single-female-headed families with children under eighteen lived below the poverty line. Impoverishment is endemic in this group as 43.8 percent of such families were below poverty in 1970.<sup>66</sup> In Nevada, the 1990 U.S. Census reported over 31 percent of all female-headed households with related children under the age of eighteen were below poverty; the figure rose to almost 45 percent in such households with related children below the age of 5.<sup>67</sup> Almost 96 percent of all Nevada's AFDC caretakers (age eighteen and over) are female.<sup>68</sup> No matter what vantage point is used to measure, children and adult females constitute the overwhelming majority of the impoverished and welfare recipients, both nationwide and in Nevada.

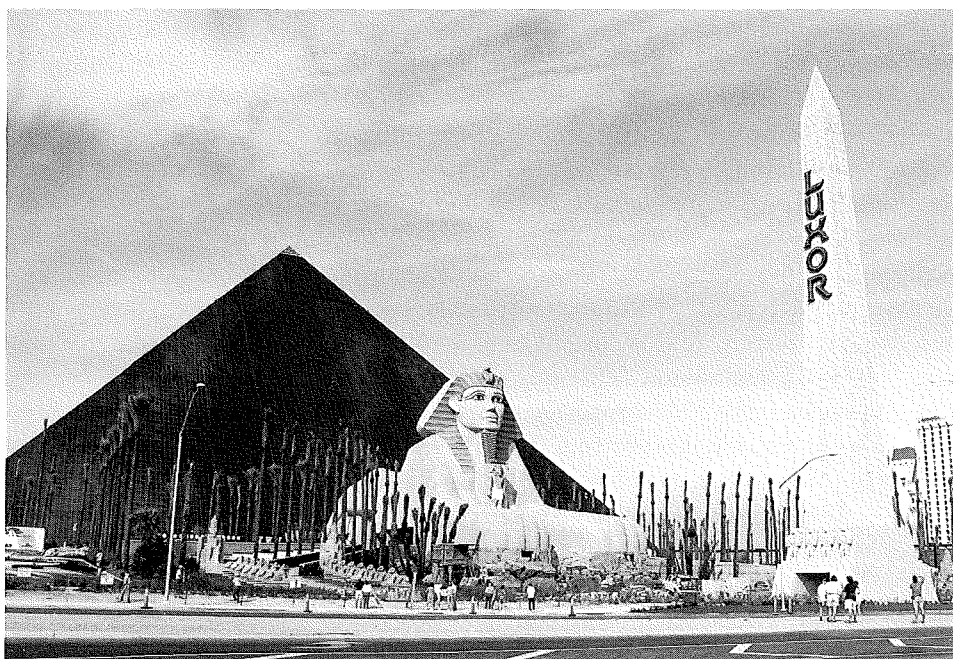
Compounding the devastating effects of wage erosion for low-end families is the decline of personal net worth which occurred in the late 1980s. A downward spiral was created as these families had to dip into savings in order to meet expenses. As wealth diminishes, the ability of a family to weather unemployment or illness is reduced and the family inexorably slides into poverty. Over the last decade, wealth, that is, the net value of assets defined as stocks, savings accounts and housing less debt, was concentrated in increasingly fewer hands. The Federal Reserve Board reported that from 1983–1988, the net worth of families earning over \$50,000 per year increased \$9500, over 5 percent, while the net worth of those earning less than \$10,000 declined \$1500, almost 40 percent. Those in the middle remained constant.<sup>69</sup> By the beginning of this decade, the top 20 percent of the population controlled 78 percent of the nation's personal assets, the bottom 40 percent had only 3 percent of the wealth, and the middle 40 percent controlled only 19 percent.<sup>70</sup>

The nature of population growth can fuel welfare caseload growth. Nevada's population increase is due largely to in-migration which is driven by both push and pull dynamics. Californians, fleeing polluted air, congestion, crime and loss of opportunity, constitute 25 percent of Nevada's in-migration.<sup>71</sup> Newcomers

are lured by a lack of state income tax, more affordable housing, clear air, low density population with its concomitant benefits and the promise of economic opportunity. Historically migration to and within America is driven by a desire for the "main chance." The approximately 10,000 new HGR jobs created in Las Vegas at the end of 1993 brought many people to Nevada. The preponderance of HGR jobs require only low-level or no skills, and little or no education or experience. Compounding the problem is the fact that there are always many more applicants than HGR jobs. NSWSD necessarily needs to provide assistance to those who get the jobs as well as those who do not.

There are 102 occupations within the HGR stratum. The vast majority of those occupations are at the lower income levels, such as waitresses/waiters, maids/janitors, dining room attendants, food preparers, card dealers, change attendants, bartenders, guards and office workers. The far fewer higher-end executive jobs have little impact on the average wage for this stratum.<sup>72</sup>

Clark County accounts for 64 percent of the state's population.<sup>73</sup> According to NSWSD estimates, Clark also has the majority of the NSWSD caseload: 74 percent of all NSWSD AFDC grant recipients, 70 percent of the total Medicaid eligibles and 72 percent of the Food Stamp recipients.<sup>74</sup> As Clark County drives the state economically, politically and socially, the following discussion on wages will be confined to Clark County.



The Luxor pyramid houses the world's largest atrium, a 100,000 square-foot casino and make-believe cities of the past, present and future. (*Las Vegas News Bureau*)

The last annual wage survey conducted by the Nevada Employment Security Division (NESD) was dated March 1, 1993. It shows Clark County HGR average wages, for the major occupations listed, ranging from a low of about \$4.70 per hour for blackjack dealers to about \$27.00 per hour for casino managers.<sup>75</sup> At forty hours per week, there are 2080 hours in an employment year. A five dollar job earns \$10,400 a year while an eight dollar job garners \$16,640.

HGR average wages are 16% less than those for all jobs combined. According to NESD, the average annual wage in Clark County in 1990 was \$22,265, while the average for HGR was \$18,813. In 1991, these figures rose to \$22,856 and approximately \$19,100, respectively.<sup>76</sup>

More specifically, according to NESD, hourly wages in Clark County for waitresses and waiters, of whom there are almost 5200 in this survey, are \$5.36–6.76 (wages are expressed as a range of the middle 50 percent in the survey, that is, 25 percent make less than the bottom of the range and 25 percent make more than top); card dealers receive \$4.25–5.00; dining room attendants and bartender helpers make \$5.19–6.97; cage cashiers earn \$7.75–10.50; change persons earn \$5.50–7.97; guards earn \$7.50–10.29 and bartenders make \$7.05–11.38; maids, over 3800 in this survey, earn \$8.50–8.50; janitors, almost 2500 in this survey, earn \$7.35–8.89; executive chefs, twenty in this survey for Las Vegas, make \$20.60–28.13; and, casino managers, fifty-five in this survey in Las Vegas, earn \$20.67–27.64.<sup>77</sup> In some of these jobs, employees also receive tips.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources 1993 poverty line for a family of four was \$14,350,<sup>78</sup> which means one wage earner for a family of four earning \$6.90 an hour or less. From the above information, it is evident that many jobs in Clark County and in tourism statewide pay less than is needed to remain above the current poverty line.

There is some debate as to the validity of the current method of determining poverty. The original method was established in 1955 and indexed to the cost of food, which went through inflationary spirals in the early 1950s. In 1969, with the intent of defining more people below poverty, the method was revised by indexing poverty to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). However, a recent study done at the University of Arizona demonstrated that the revised method, because of changing market conditions, actually achieved the opposite and kept more people from being defined below poverty. For example, the poverty line in 1990 for a family of four was about \$13,000; if the original calculation had been used, that figure would rise to over \$20,000.<sup>79</sup>

In 1989, using the revised method, 31.5 million people were defined as living in poverty. Two million were year-round full-time workers. If the original computational method were used, this number would increase by about 50 percent, raising the number of full-time workers below poverty to six million.<sup>80</sup> When the effects of the 1990 recession are noted, the more than 31.5 million people below poverty in 1989 became 33.6 million in 1990 and rose to 35.7 million in 1991. The national poverty rate grew from 13.5 percent in 1990 to 14.2 percent in 1991.<sup>81</sup> In

the national political arena, the debate over the computation of poverty cleaves along partisan lines. The discussion could heat up during President Clinton's administration. If poverty is redefined, Nevada and the nation will experience a proportional increase in welfare and Medicaid caseloads.

Economically, throughout calendar year 1987, Nevada was very strong within the national context in terms of industrial employment growth. At the end of the last quarter of that year, and for most of the year, Nevada finished as the leader in industrial employment growth nationwide.<sup>82</sup> Significant development continued in Clark County as the Mirage and Excalibur hotels were under construction. Over seven thousand new rooms came on line in late 1989 and early 1990 with a significant jump in HGR employment of well over 11,000 new jobs.<sup>83</sup>

As population growth is generally fueled by economic growth,<sup>84</sup> Nevada's population grew at the rate of 6 percent per year during the late 1980s but, as the recession developed, dropped to 5 percent for 1991, 3.5 percent for 1992 and began turning upward again in 1993 for a rate of just over 4 percent growth<sup>85</sup> as the lure of approximately 10,000 new HGR jobs became available in late 1993.<sup>86</sup> The Nevada Employment Security Division estimated that the 1993 MGM construction alone generated 5,000 HGR jobs directly and another 20,000 jobs indirectly.<sup>87</sup>

NSWD caseload kept pace with the economic and population growth. While other states in the nation generally experienced a leveling off or decline in caseload as the economy expanded into the late 1980s, Nevada's caseload grew at unprecedented rates, driven by the nature of the economic and population growth occurring within the state. Even as AFDC caseload exploded nationwide beginning in July 1989 (Nevada's take off-point was December 1987), Nevada continued to take an ever increasing share of the national caseload, a trend which began in the early 1980s.

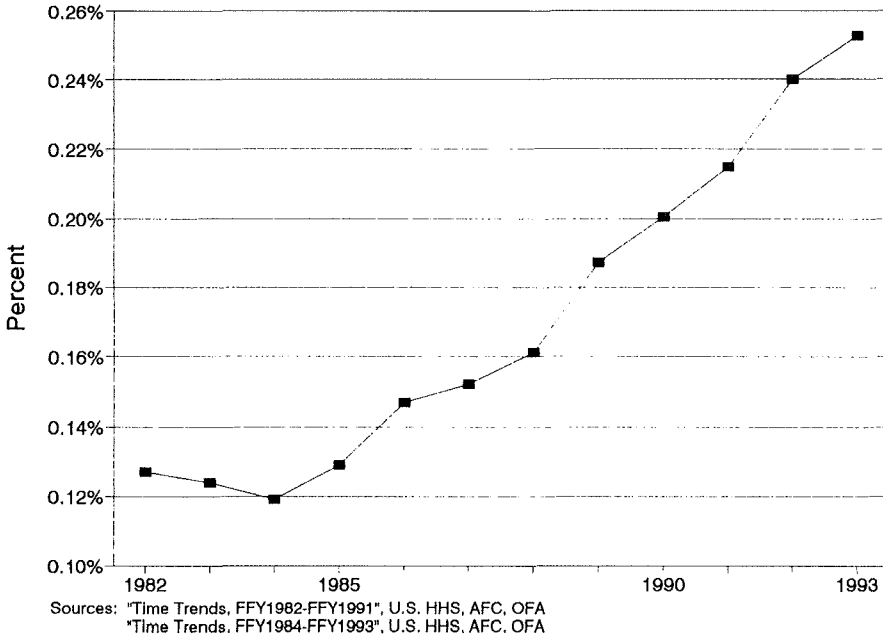
AFDC cash grant recipients increased about 15 percent per year from FY 1988 through FY 1991; 24 percent FY 1992 over FY 1991; and slowed increasing in July 1992 to about 10 percent FY 1993 over FY 1992. NSWD is projecting about a 10 percent increase for FY 1994 over FY 1993.

CHAP grew nearly 475 percent from FY 1989 to FY 1990; well over 200 percent for FY 1991 over FY 1990; 110 percent for FY 1992 over FY 1991; and is estimated to increase about 50 percent FY 1993 over FY 1992 and projected to increase about 19 percent for FY 1994 over FY 1993.

In Nevada, Medical Payments to the Disabled represents the highest cost per recipient of all Medicaid programs. The fastest rising group of eligibles is occurring within the working age population.<sup>88</sup> Disabled eligibles increased 10 to 15 percent per year from FY 1987 through FY 1991; over 20 percent for FY 1992 over FY 1991 and again FY 1993 over FY 1992. Disabled is projected to increase about 15 percent for FY 1994 over FY 1993.

Food Stamp Participating Persons have been increasing at a rate of over 20 percent per year since 1989 (with a 29 percent increase for FY 1992 over FY 1991);

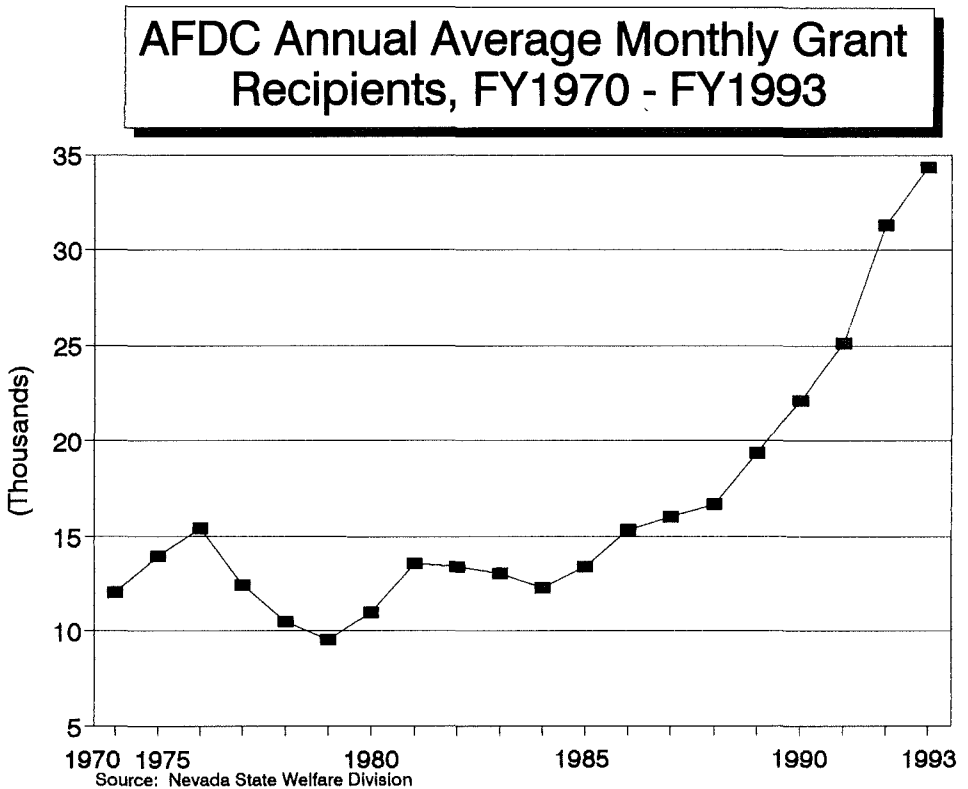
### NSWD AFDC Recipients, FFY1982 - FFY1993 As Percent of National Total



over 19 percent FY 1993 over FY 1992; and is projected to increase about 8 percent for FY 1994 over FY 1993.<sup>89</sup>

Nevada's rise in welfare assistance caseloads during the same period in which the state led the nation in the creation of jobs contradicted conventional wisdom which ties job creation to falling welfare caseloads. The explanation can be found in the nature of the jobs created. The creation of enormous numbers of low-wage jobs in Nevada's hotel, gaming and recreation subcategory of the service sector in the late 1980s and early 1990s led to an increase rather than a decrease in welfare caseloads. Low-wage jobs generally require few skills, education or experience. When an economic downturn occurs in the casinos due to, for instance, seasonal trends in tourism, acts of nature or war or threat of war, lay-offs occur. People who occupy jobs at the low end of the employment ladder, such as in these jobs, often lack resources and skills which can aid in weathering economic downturns and they are forced to turn to public assistance. The Nevada State Welfare Division has also served as a safety net to those who came to Nevada seeking casino employment during the recession of the early 1990s but were unsuccessful.

Prior to the fall of 1989, the Nevada State Welfare Division had no employ-

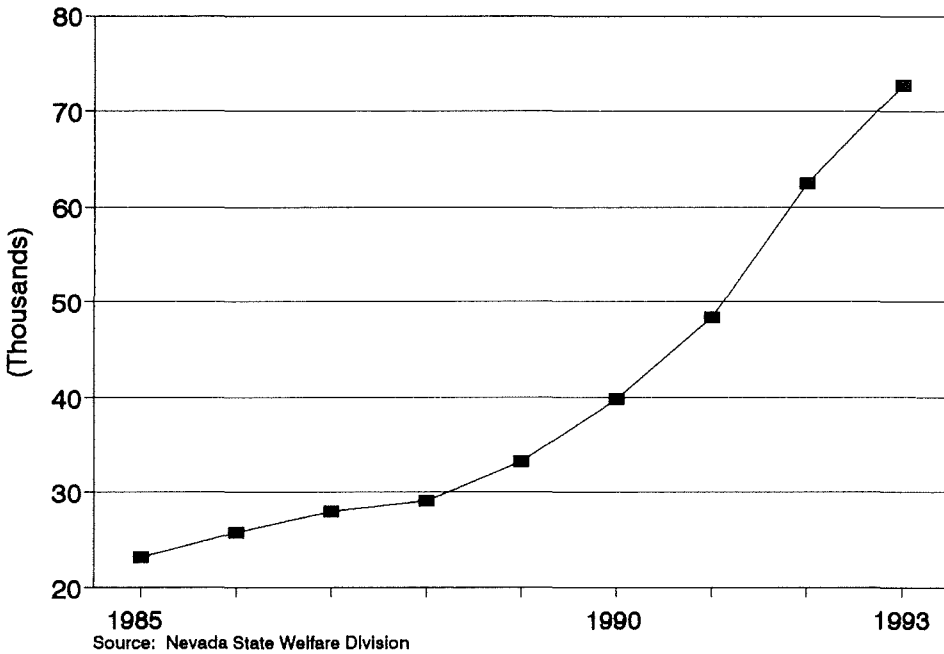


ment variable in its caseload projection models. Unemployment and full employment rates for the states of Nevada and California had been tried but without success. However, by the fall of 1989, the author successfully developed employment in Nevada's hotel, gaming and recreation subcategory of the larger service category as the employment variable in the Welfare Division's models. In conventional fashion, an inverse correlation was established; as lay-offs occurred, caseloads rose. However, unconventionally, as employment rose, caseloads in the short run leveled off rather than declined, and in the long run increased numbers of gaming jobs meant an ever-increasing caseload.

From a different perspective, Carey McWilliams, writing in the *Nation* in 1950, turned his critical faculties toward the relationship between gambling and the social, economic and cultural good. By looking at Nevada, he debunked the idea that legalized gambling was economically and socially sound. Reno's citizens, he noted, essentially underwrote casino security by funding a twenty-four-hour police force, the cost of which was disproportionately higher than that for other cities of comparable size. The presence of casinos, he observed, blunted economic diversification while generating but 12.50 percent of the state's income through a direct tax. Citing Nevada's national lead in suicide per capita, a distinction maintained to this day, and the many economic costs of gaming to



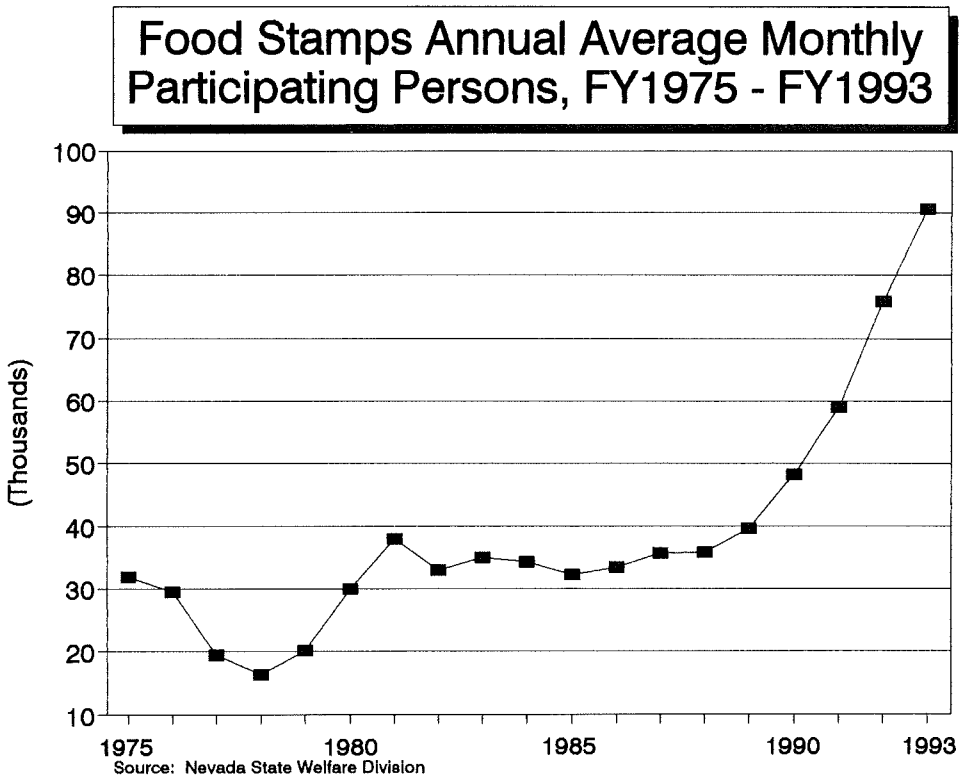
### Total Medicaid Annual Average Monthly Eligibles, FY1985 - FY1993



Nevada's citizens, McWilliams suggested that "before too many American communities 'follow Nevada's lead' . . . they had better take a long second look to determine just what the Nevada experience really means."<sup>90</sup>

Unconventional growth in welfare caseloads is only one of many problems America's gaming states face. The consequences may be grave.<sup>91</sup> Disproportionately high numbers of low wage jobs work against the optimum expression of a market-driven economy. Henry Ford understood the relationship between wages and purchasing power. To that end he raised the pay of his employees high enough so that they could afford to buy Fords.<sup>92</sup> Richard J. Barnet, Senior Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C., has recently observed that "the lack of decently compensated jobs under decent working conditions is a global deficit so vast as to require fundamental rethinking about the global economic system itself." Ultimately, Barnet says, "the job crisis raises the most fundamental question of human existence: What are we doing here?"<sup>93</sup>

If other states believe that their future lies with gaming, a closer examination of Nevada society including its welfare caseload and employment structure would be instructive. The Nevada experience can be viewed as a significant economic, social and cultural expression of the post-modern world, and, per-



haps more important, as a cautionary tale of impoverishment behind a veil of glitter.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Margaret A. Rose, *The Post-Modern and the Post-Industrial, A Critical Analysis* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 5.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Macy, "Topping Off Held for Vegas Resort," *Nevada Appeal* (11 July 1993), B7. Macy reports that nine Boeing 747s can be stacked inside the atrium. Additionally, there are three theme parks, one of which is an archaeological dig. Motorists enter the complex through a ten-story-tall sphinx which accommodates nine lanes of traffic. A beam of light atop the pyramid can be seen 250 miles away if one is airborne. The Luxor's pyramid is the largest pyramid built in the last two thousand years, according to William Eadington, "The Emergence of Casino Gaming as a Major Factor in Tourism Markets: Policy Issues and Considerations," in Richard Butler and Douglas Pearle, eds., *Emerging Issues in Tourism Research* (London: Rutledge, Kegan Paul, forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup>Mimi Swartz, "Las Vegas and Its New Attractions," *Nevada Appeal* (14 February 1994), A2.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* See also John Barbour, "Nevada Casinos: Resorting to New Risks," *Nevada Appeal* (6 March 1994), B8.

<sup>5</sup>Kirsten Simonsen, "Planning on 'Postmodern' Conditions," *Acta Sociologica, Journal of the Scandinavian Sociological Association*, 1990, (33), 1, 54.

<sup>6</sup>According to a one-hour Public Broadcasting System television documentary, the global economy increasingly transcends national borders, is multi-national in form and is driven by global consumerism. According to John Kenneth Galbraith, a documentary participant, the global economy is capitalistic in nature as it is an "essentially peaceful force." "Warfare", he says, "is contrary to the

interests of multinational corporations." However, Joel Kurtzman, Executive Editor, *Harvard Business Review*, warns in the film, that "a dangerous sense of powerlessness . . . can result when remote, faceless companies rule our lives." Lynn Elber, AP Television writer, "PBS Feature Explores Global Economy," *Nevada Appeal* (21 December 1993), A6.

<sup>7</sup>According to the Research Section of the Nevada Employment Security Division, Nevada's industrial profile is less diversified than that of the nation and has a significantly higher proportion of service and construction jobs and significantly smaller share of manufacturing jobs. Government and trade jobs in Nevada are fewer than in the nation as well. *Nevada Occupational Projections, 1991-1996*, Carson City: Employment Security Research, Nevada Employment Security Division (September 1992). See also, *Nevada Business & Economic Indicators, Annual 1993 Issue* (Reno: Nevada Small Business Development Center, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, College of Business Administration, University of Nevada, Reno, 1994), 12-20.

<sup>8</sup>A study originally prepared under a contract with the Office of Research and Development, Manpower Administration, United States Department of Labor, under the authority of the Manpower Development and Training Act and under the sponsorship of the National Manpower Policy Task Force, links low wages with women, teen-agers, and non-whites in the trade and service sectors, as well as with other attributes, such as low skill and low educational attainment and "attitudes and behavior characteristics of a lower-class subculture, or 'culture of poverty.'" Charles T. Stewart Jr., *Low-Wage Workers in an Affluent Society*, (New York: Nelson-Hall Company, 1974), 13.

<sup>9</sup>Mississippi expects to have forty floating casinos by the middle of 1994. Woody Baird, Associated Press Writer, "Poverty, Poverty Everywhere, Then 'The Boat Came In,'" *Nevada Appeal* (1993 October 4), A7.

<sup>10</sup>The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act of 1988 (IGRA) has offered a solution to the conflict posed by the fact that state laws are not enforceable on Indian lands, as such lands are sovereign entities. The Seminole tribe of Florida opened a high stakes bingo game on tribal land in 1979. The state of Florida expressed a fear that without federal or state regulation such enterprises would be infiltrated by criminal elements. Such similar gaming activities as bingo, lotto, video games and card games were developing on tribal lands in other places, such as in southern California, on Oneida land in Wisconsin and on Pequot land in Connecticut. The IGRA resulted after several years of discussions between gaming tribes, states, the gaming industry, the administration and the congress, and offers a system for regulating gaming on Indian lands. Out of the IGRA comes the classification of gaming into three types: Class I—social games played solely for prizes of minimal value; Class II—the game of chance commonly known as bingo and other games similar to bingo and any electronic or computer-aided bingo; Class III—all other types of gambling, including baccarat, chemin de fer, blackjack, slot machines, video poker, pari-mutuel racing and jai alai. Of the thirty-one states with federally-recognized Indian tribes as of July 1992, nine states had approved state-tribal gaming compacts, necessary under IGRA before a tribe can conduct Class III gaming. Pam Greenberg and Judy Zeilo, "States and the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act," *National Conference of State Legislatures*, July 1992, Vol. 17, No. 16, 1-3, *ad passim*.

<sup>11</sup>"Morning Edition," National Public Radio, 1st of 3 part series on gaming, 8 November 1993. The only two states which do not allow gaming are Utah and Hawaii. Eadington, "The Emergence of Casino Gaming as a Major Factor in Tourism Markets."

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>Education was specifically used as a beneficiary in the push for legalization of California's state lottery in the late 1970s. In regard to bingo, see John C. Burnham, *Bad Habits: Drinking, Smoking, Taking Drugs, Gambling, Sexual Misbehavior, and Swearing in American History* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), 161, 164.

<sup>14</sup>Robert Macy, "Mirage Tells of Family-Themed Resort," *Nevada Appeal* (30 October 1991), A5; Robert Macy, "Gaming on Multibillion Dollar Binge to Court Families," *Nevada Appeal* (12 November 1991), A6; Robert Macy, "Circus Circus Announces Plans for \$290 Million Resort," *Nevada Appeal* (19 November 1991), A10. Tom Bruny, director of advertising and public relations for the new MGM complex, states that a 1992 nationwide survey found that only 15 percent of the people in the United States had ever been to Las Vegas; 22 million visitors came to Las Vegas that year. Alan Feldman, spokesman for Mirage Resorts, states that the intent of the new mega-resorts is to attract families, that the trend among families is to bring the children. Feldman notes "the percentage of people

with children . . . has doubled in the last five years.' " The demographics demonstrate a huge untapped market of young people with disposable income. The mega-resorts have rides, attractions, theme streets, retail stores, food outlets as well as casinos the size of several football fields. The MGM has a "Young Hotel" with supervised activities in a child-care center for hotel guests as well as theme park visitors. Mimi Swartz, "Bid for Families, Las Vegas' 33 Acre Theme Park Being Called 'Orlando West' with Gaming," *Nevada Appeal* (8 April 1993), C3. Robert Maxey, president and chief executive of MGM Grand Inc., is quoted as saying that "currently [1991] only 5% of the Las Vegas visitors are under the age of 16. . . ."

<sup>15</sup>In recent column in *Harper's*, Lewis Lapham expounded on William Leach's *Land of Desire*, a history of consumer capitalism in the United States between 1880 and 1930. Leach, says Lapham, credits the conscious invention of consumer capitalism to an alliance between banks and business corporations in the 1880s. Based on Leach's argument, "consumptionism," says Lapham, is "artificial and deliberately contrived" and "cannot be mistaken for the laws of human nature." Lewis H. Lapham, "Notebook: Yellow Brick Road," *Harper's Magazine*, (November 1993), 10. In *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, Mike Featherstone states that the culture of a consumer society is "based on the assumption that the movement towards mass consumption was accompanied by a general reorganization of symbolic production, everyday experiences and practices. A number of studies," he continues, "have traced its origins back to the eighteenth century for the middle classes in Britain and to the nineteenth century for the working classes in Britain, France and the United States, with the development of advertising, department stores, holiday resorts, mass entertainment and leisure etc." Mike Featherstone, *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism* (New York: Sage Publications, 1991), 113.

<sup>16</sup>The nation is currently experiencing a new growth spurt, second only to that of the 1950s. The population will increase by 27 million to a total of 276 million from 1990 to 2000. During the 1950s, 28 million were added to the population. The Census Bureau projects a population of about 392 million by 2050. "U.S. Population Growing Faster Than Previously Projected," *Census and You*, Volume 26, No. 10, October 1993, 1. The figures come from revised population projections released by the Census Bureau in the report *Population Projections of the United States, by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1993 to 2050*, (Series P-25-1104).

Nearly 23 million visitors came to Las Vegas in 1993 and spent almost \$15 billion dollars. John Barbour, "Nevada Casinos: Resorting to New Risks," *Nevada Appeal* (6 March 1994), B8. One third of Las Vegas's visitors come from California. "Las Vegas Bracing for Record Crowd," *Nevada Appeal* (29 May 1994), A7. About one-half of California's 32 million people live in the three southern California counties of Los Angeles, Orange and Riverside. "USA Statistics in Brief, 1992," U.S. Bureau of the Census.

<sup>17</sup>In a series of recent local newspaper articles, the executive branch of Nevada state government regards the North American Free Trade Agreement not only as beneficial for trade but for tourism as well. Lt. Governor Sue Wagner led a delegation of Nevada business leaders to Mexico in April 1994 to explore the possibilities. The event was sponsored by the U.S. Department of Commerce, with more than 150 companies participating from fifteen states. Nevada's delegation was the only one with an elected state official participating. Mexico, the article states, has 92 million people, with "an estimated 20 million of those people . . . affluent, a number expected to grow as NAFTA-related employment and economic opportunity grow." Lt. Governor Wagner told a group of Monterrey, Mexico, tour operators that "Mexican tourists . . . are premium tourists." The article states that Wagner asked for their assistance in "sending more clients north to ski, gamble and sightsee. She stressed that point later during a private meeting in Mexico City with Francisco Javier Alejo, undersecretary for promotion and development." John Stearns, "Nevadans Head South for Trade," *Reno Gazette-Journal* (8 May 1994), 1A + 5A. In a companion article, Gerald Petersen, Professor of Language and specialist in Latin American countries, explained Nevada's strategy, which entails steering Mexican tourists toward the skiing of the north and other outdoor recreation. " 'A lot of these wealthy Mexicans,' " said Petersen, " 'are family men that bring their whole family' on vacation." Currently, the article goes on, Reno-Tahoe is rather unknown to most Mexicans. "Reno-Tahoe Largely Unknown to Mexican Tourists," *Reno Gazette-Journal* (8 May 1994), 4A.

<sup>18</sup>Post-war television's limited offerings served to unify people, as Marshall McLuhan pointed out

in *The Medium Is the Message*. A fundamentally monolithic view of American life was put forth largely by Madison Avenue, seeking to persuade all those who watched that they needed the products advertised. This kind of consumptionism is artificially induced. Ironically, the imminent fiber-optic superdata highway with its hundreds of channels, interactive capabilities and pay-for-view will bring fragmentation of the market and work against the globalism of the post-modern world.

<sup>19</sup>William Thompson, Professor of Public Administration, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, says that gaming is only a short-term fix for revenues. "Morning Edition," National Public Radio, 3rd of 3 part series on gaming, 10 November 1993.

<sup>20</sup>According to John O. Wilson, Chief Economist, Bank of America, California lost 600,000 to 800,000 jobs from 1990 to 1992 as a result of growing global competition and changing government priorities. California has been on a war-time economy for half a century and now suffers the consequences of defense cutbacks. Wilson believes that these trends are independent of the recent national recession and employment reductions, or "downsizing," and will continue through the 1993-1995 period, resulting in an additional loss of 400,000 jobs in California. "More 'Downsizing' due", *Nevada Appeal* (5 May 1993), A9. One view of southern California is that of "the engine that powered the state's economy [in the 1980s]"; whereas, "in the 1990s, it is the anchor weighing down the state's recovery." Kathleen Pender, "Problems in South Drag Down Northern California", *San Francisco Chronicle* (21 December 1992), A9. Pender, a *Chronicle* staff writer, quotes Ted Gibson, Principal Economist, State Finance Department, as saying that the northern part of the state cannot have a meaningful recovery "until we do something about the south." Historically, Nevada's economic destiny has been tied to California in varying degrees; the current "downsizing" and recessionary period is no exception. See Dave Palermo, "Vegans Vie for Treasure Island Jobs," *Las Vegas Review Journal* (29 April 1993), 1B-2B. The article quotes Treasure Island President, Marc Schorr, as saying that the new resort expected to process 40,000 job applications for the 4,500 jobs available. The article notes the presence of hopeful applicants from out-of-state. In November 1993, MGM officials reported that the hotel received close to 100,000 applications for the 7,500 jobs in the hotel, casino and theme park. "World's Biggest Resort Gains Approval, Project Opening Set," *Nevada Appeal* (21 November 1993), A2. Jim Hanna, Director of Research, Nevada Employment Security Division, states that "Somebody unemployed in Los Angeles with low job skills reads there are 15,000 jobs open in Las Vegas and decides to move. . . . Most people who migrate here don't have job offers when they arrive," he continued. "Some aren't going to be successful since it takes a while to get a job." "Welfare Rolls Up as Jobless Flock to Las Vegas," *Nevada Appeal*, (16 May 1994), B2.

<sup>21</sup>Nevada's unemployment rose from 6.6 percent in August 1993 to 7.25 percent in September 1993 (the highest rate since December 1985), due to the influx of job seekers, according to the Nevada State Employment Security Division. However, Karen Rhodes, spokeswoman for the division, said that "even though the rate is higher than it has been in the last eight years, unemployment actually has been steady for more than a year . . . [at] 6.9 percent monthly average." "Unemployment Rate Hits 7.2 Percent," *Nevada Appeal* (7 November 1993), A6. In a recent publication of the division, it was stated that "until job growth improves in the rest of the nation, Nevada will remain a destination for unemployed workers from other parts of the country and Nevada's [unemployment] rate will probably remain in that 6.3 to 7.1 percent range." "Nevada Economy in Brief", State of Nevada Employment Security Division, August 1993. According to Jim Hanna, Director of Research, Nevada Employment Security Division, Nevada led the nation in job creation for 1993 with 48,300 new jobs for a 7.4 percent increase. "Welfare Rolls Up as Jobless Flock to Las Vegas," *Nevada Appeal* (16 May 1994), B2. Nevada's unemployment rate rose in April 1994 despite hiring gains made in casinos, construction, trade and other areas. Brendan Riley, "April Jobless Rate Up," *Nevada Appeal* (29 May 1994), C7.

<sup>22</sup>Phillip I. Earl, "Veiling the Tiger: The Crusade Against Gambling, 1859-1910," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, vol. 29, no. 3 (Fall 1985), 175-204. See also Jerome E. Edwards, "From Back Alley to Main Street, Nevada's Acceptance of Gambling," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, vol. 33, no. 1 (Spring 1990), 16. Edwards locates the anti-gambling impulse most especially within the "leadership of several powerful mainline Protestant denominations, such as the Methodist, Baptist, and Presbyterian, which had influenced the national moral tone for many years."

<sup>23</sup>Earl, "Veiling the Tiger," 204.

<sup>24</sup>"Gaming—A Nevada Prodigy," *State of Nevada, Comprehensive Annual Financial Report for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1993*, xxi.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, xxii.

<sup>26</sup>William D. Rowley, *Reno, Hub of the Washoe Country, An Illustrated History*, (Windsor Publications, 1984), 61.

<sup>27</sup>Norman Biltz, a twentieth-century equal to the America's nineteenth-century robber barons, was a brilliant interpreter of modern marketing principles. He participated in shaping the economic principles of "One Sound State" and used them as his vehicle in selling Nevada. He along with George Springmeyer, Lou Biddle and Pat McCarran explained to then Governor Balzar how [the elimination of taxes on the wealthy] would "move these wealthy people in, which would be an asset to the state." Balzar supported this approach and was described by Biltz as "a very, very fine man." Among the more notable wealthy Americans whom Biltz and his compatriots wooed to Lake Tahoe and Nevada were Major Max Fleischmann, E. L. Cord, Hugh D. Auchincloss and Bing Crosby. In his oral history, Biltz described his marketing techniques, which included being "very, very thoroughly prepared. We would gather every bit of information we could on the individual, and his family, attorney . . . before we ever even contacted him." A preparation time of two or three months was not uncommon for Biltz. They purchased a list of America's millionaires worth \$20,000,000 or more. Marketing strategies included publishing a magazine, *Nevada, the Last Frontier*, and mailing it to the prospective clients "in a leather binder made with their name on them . . . so it wouldn't land in the waste-paper basket, until they had read it." The calling would only start after this initial mailing. Biltz recounts how "some sixty or seventy of them [wealthy men] we brought in." Biltz's strategy looked beyond the short-run of selling lots by developing a construction company, Sierra Construction, "to build houses in the manner that they wanted them built. We found servants for them; we catered to them in every possible way." Norman H. Biltz, *Memoirs of "Duke of Nevada": Developments of Lake Tahoe, California and Nevada; Reminiscences of Nevada Political and Financial Life*, (Reno: University of Nevada, Reno, Department of Special Collections, Oral History Program), 1969, 32–35; 99–100.

<sup>28</sup>Richard G. Lillard, *Desert Challenge, An Interpretation of Nevada* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), 83–87, *ad passim*.

<sup>29</sup>Rowley, *Reno*, 61.

<sup>30</sup>Biltz, *Memoirs*, 106–107; Burnham, *Bad Habits*, 155.

<sup>31</sup>"An Act Relating to the Support of the Poor," approved 29 November 1861, *Revised Laws of Nevada*, Volume 1, 832–835.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup>*Elko Independent* (19 August 1947), n.p., in "Welfare News Clippings" from the Legislative Counsel Bureau Clipping Files, file 38.422, State Welfare Administration, Scrapbook 1937–1947, Nevada State Archives, Carson City, Nevada. Hereinafter cited as *Welfare News Clippings*. "An Act Providing Old-Age Pension," approved 12 March 1925, *Statutes of Nevada*, 1925, 170–75; "An Act . . . Providing for Compulsory Assistance to Needy Aged Persons . . .," approved 12 March 1937 *Statutes of Nevada*, 1937, 129–39.

<sup>34</sup>*State Welfare Laws*, Bulletin No. 108, (Carson City, Nevada State Legislative Counsel Bureau, December 1972), 5, *ad passim*.

<sup>35</sup>*Nevada State Journal* (26 July 1937), n.p., "Welfare News Clippings," 1950–1954 Scrapbook.

<sup>36</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette*, (9 July 1937), n.p., and *Reno Evening Gazette* (16 July 1937), n.p., "Welfare News Clippings File," 1950–1954 Scrapbook.

<sup>37</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (14 October 1937), n.p. Welfare News Clippings, 1950–1954 Scrapbook. By 1950, many Nevadans were hoping to balance the budget by cutting state government. A *Sparks Tribune* editorialized against such an approach and asked that with only 9–10 percent of the state budget going toward the cost of state government, "Where Will the Savings Come From? *Sparks Tribune* (20 October 1950), n.p., "Welfare News Clippings," 1950–1954 Scrapbook.

<sup>38</sup>*Reno Evening Gazette* (11 October 1937), n.p., "Welfare News Clippings," 1950–1954 Scrapbook.

<sup>39</sup>*Reno Gazette Journal* (12 January 1947), n.p., "Welfare News Clippings," 1950–1954 Scrapbook.

<sup>40</sup>The 1955 Legislature has been described as one of Nevada's "notable" legislatures as it faced a constellation of social problems and "made," says Mary Ellen Glass, "the most important and

longest-lasting contributions to government in the history of Nevada . . . for the members of 1955 recognized and realistically met Nevada's needs for the modern era, altering irrevocably many functions of the state government." That legislature attempted to deal with an inadequately financed state educational system, a lack of an Aid to Dependent Children law, and corruption within the gaming industry. All of these problems were fueled by a rapid post-war expansion in population. Mary Ellen Glass, "Nevada Turning Points: The State Legislature of 1955," *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*, vol. 23, no. 4 (Winter 1980), 223.

<sup>41</sup>*Journal* [sic] (12 January 1947), n.p., and *Boulder Journal* (10 December 1947), n.p., "Welfare News Clippings" 1937-1947 Scrapbook. The January article states that "Although Nevada is the state with the highest per capita income, it is the only state in the union which does not have aid to dependent children as provided for in the social security act."

<sup>42</sup>"Overview" *FY1993 Legislative Fact Book*, (Carson City: Nevada State Welfare Division, January 1993), n.p.

<sup>43</sup>Elmer R. Rusco, "Poverty in Washoe County" (Bureau of Governmental Research, Reno, Nevada, 1966), typescript, University of Nevada, Reno, Library, Department of Special Collections. Rusco received a grant through the Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 to conduct a study of poverty within Washoe County. Rusco's study was meant to determine whether certain criteria were met within the county to make the county eligible for assistance from the Office of Economic Opportunity for community action programs. One criterion which had to be met was to establish the inadequacy of current services and facilities within the county. See also: "State Welfare Laws; Consolidation of State and Local Welfare Programs," Bulletin No. 115, (Carson City: Nevada State Legislative Counsel Bureau, September 1974), "Means of Employing Welfare Recipient," Bulletin No. 81-8, (Carson City, Nevada: Nevada State Legislative Counsel Bureau, October 1980). Additionally, the 1991 and 1993 legislatures established interim committees to examine welfare: In 1991 the committee examined the welfare agency (see "Welfare System in Nevada", Bulletin No. 93-21 [Legislative Commission of the Legislative Counsel Bureau, State of Nevada, September 1992]), and in 1993 the committee made recommendations for welfare reform in Nevada.

<sup>44</sup>NSWD staff developed multiple regression models to project AFDC Basic, AFDC-UP, CHAP, Disabled, Child Welfare, Food Stamps and Child Support Enforcement. Simple linear regression models are used to project Aged, Blind, some aspects of Disabled and Child Support Enforcement cases. All of these models serve as the foundation for the NSWD budget-building process.

All of the variables used in the multiple regression models must be statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level, which is standard in social science research. Many of the variables have "t" scores which put them at the 99.9 percent confidence level. See Diane Nassir, "Current Year Projections," Research & Statistics, NSWD, FY 1994.

The author runs the NSWD projection models monthly and projects out through the end of the current biennium, currently through state fiscal year 1995. The July projections of each year are known as the "baseline" projections and are tracked over time for accuracy in predicting one, two and three years into the future.

Nevada's AFDC baseline models have been exceptionally strong. From 1989-1991, the AFDC projection was within  $\pm 1.2$  percent of the actual for the first year out. The second year was within  $\pm 0.2$  percent to 5.8 percent of the actual. The 1992 baseline projection for FY1993 overprojected 4.8 percent (See Diane E. Nassir, "R&S FY Baseline Projections Compared to Actuals: FY87-FY92 w/o retro," Research and Statistics, NSWD, 9 September 1993) as caseload growth slowed last year in Nevada as well as in other rapidly expanding states such as Texas. Texas analysts do not know why (Morris Williamson, Texas Department of Human Resources, Thirty-third Annual Conference, National Association of Welfare Research and Statistics, 7 August 1993, Scottsdale, AZ). Nevada suggests that this was due to the deepening recession in California as well as in Nevada; Californians remained at home as employment prospects dimmed in Nevada. This is supported by the fact that Nevada's rate of population growth also slowed that year. The welfare assistance safety net is greater in California compared to Nevada; California pays \$674 a month for a family of three (poverty is \$1,027 per month for a family of three; California pays at approximately 66 percent of poverty) on AFDC as opposed to \$348 (approximately 34 percent of poverty) in Nevada; Texas pays \$184 (approximately 18 percent of poverty). (See "AFDC Need Standards and Payment Levels," AFDC Section, FY1994 Legislative Fact Book, NSWD, December 1993).

The author established a positive correlation between state population and AFDC Basic Public Housing recipients, which conforms to the conventional wisdom. As the population rises, recipients increase. (See AFDC Basic PH Current Year model, Research & Statistics, NSW, FY1994).

<sup>45</sup>NSWD models were based on the work done by Robert D. Plotnick and Russell M. Lidman, "Forecasting AFDC Caseloads," *Public Welfare* (Winter 1987), 31-35, 46. At the time, Plotnick was Associate Professor of Public Affairs and Social Work at the University of Washington, Seattle, Washington. Lidman was Director of the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Olympia, Washington. Their work was supported by the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. They cited the work of Jean Baldwin Grossman, "The Technical Report for the AFDC Forecasting Project," prepared for the Social Security Administration by Mathematica Policy Research, February 1985. This study developed forecasting models for national AFDC caseloads. This puts NSW's model in the mainstream. At the time only a handful of states used multiple regression analysis to project AFDC. In December 1987, one year after the models were developed, Nevada's AFDC caseload began its rapid ascent. It was very fortunate that a good statistical model was in use at the beginning of this rise.

<sup>46</sup>*Nevada Occupational Projections, 1991-1996* (Carson City: Employment Security Research, Nevada Employment Security Division, September 1992), 8.

<sup>47</sup>AFDC and Medicaid Forecasting Conference," National Association of State Budget Officers, Washington, D.C., 9 September 1989. The author detailed this phenomenon and asked if other states had a similar experience. None did; rather, the participants reported, as the economy expanded in the late 1980s, caseloads in other states dropped. As the author had just begun looking at the relationship between HGR employment and caseload, this information confirmed the peculiarities of the Nevada experience. It is the low-wage, marginal benefits of such a large category as HGR which creates the relationship.

<sup>48</sup>Diane E. Nassir, "Program Analyses," Food Stamp section, Research & Statistics, Nevada State Welfare Division, October 1993. The raw data for these statistics comes from the Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, FNS-388/250, for each federal fiscal year.

<sup>49</sup>Courtney Brenn, "Nevada Outpaces National Average in Income Growth," *Reno Gazette-Journal* (8 October 1993), 1A. Nevada's per capita income for 1992 was \$21,385 compared to the national average of \$20,114.

<sup>50</sup>Nevada's per capita income rose to \$22,729 in 1993 compared to \$20,817 for the nation. Connecticut ranked highest at \$28,110, while Mississippi was lowest at \$14,894. "Nevada News Notes," Nevada Employment Security Research, April 1994, 1.

<sup>51</sup>According to Mike Clarke, Labor Economist, Nevada Employment Security Division, Nevada's high per capita income is due to the fact that there is a high participation rate of workers in the state compared to other states. Nevada is a 24-hour economy with many easily obtainable jobs. Additionally, because of the tax structure (realized by the "One Sound State" movement discussed above), many people with high incomes retire to Nevada. Telephone conversation with Mike Clarke, 6 September 1993.

<sup>52</sup>This information comes from the U.S. Census. The 1990 rate is based on 1989 economic data collected for the 1990 census. Since the 1992 rates are annual and are established differently, caution must be used. The 1990 decennial poverty rate for Nevada was 10.2 percent while the 1990 annual rate was 9.8 percent and 14.4 percent for 1992. The 1990 rate from 1990 Census, U.S. Census Bureau; annual rates from U.S. Bureau of the Census, "Poverty in the United States: 1992, Current Population Reports, Consumer Income," Series P60-185, Table C, "Percent of Persons in Poverty, by State: 1990, 1991, and 1992," x. The same report states that although all states demonstrated a percentage increase from 1990 to 1992, only four states had "statistically significant changes in their poverty rates between 1990 and 1993: California, Nevada, North Carolina, and Rhode Island," xi.

<sup>53</sup>*Ibid.*, Table E, "Percent of Persons not Covered by Health Insurance, by State: 1990, 1992, and 1992," xxiv.

<sup>54</sup>Telephone conversation with George Anastassatos, Labor Economist III, Nevada Employment Security Division, 1 April 1993, Carson City, Nevada. Hereinafter cited as Anastassatos, 1 April 1993.

<sup>55</sup>In Las Vegas, service jobs are still greater than the state average. In March 1994 over 47 percent of all jobs were within the service category, compared to 46 percent in March 1993. "Economic Update," Nevada Employment Security Division, 1st Quarter 1994, 11.



<sup>56</sup>*Nevada Business & Economic Indicators, Annual 1993 Issue*, Nevada Small Business Development Center, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, College of Business Administration, University of Nevada, Reno, 1994, 13–18.

<sup>57</sup>Nevada Employment Security Division, "Nevada Employment Summary, Statewide, Reno and Las Vegas," CY1980–CY1993. Beginning in January 1994 and for a period of ten years, Clark County industrial-based employment data includes Nye County, Nevada, and Mojave County, Arizona. Prior to this, Clark County data contained only Clark County. Every ten years, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget reevaluates and redefines the Labor Market Areas (LMAs). The evaluation is based on commuter data taken from the decennial census. Dan Culbert, Labor Economist, Nevada Employment Security Division explains "the reasons for the change in the Las Vegas LMA are relatively simple. With the tremendous hotel-casino growth in Laughlin in the past decade, there has developed a close relationship with Bullhead City [Mojave County] in Arizona as a bedroom community. This, coupled with Las Vegas residents working at the Nevada Nuclear Test Site in southern Nye County and the growth of Pahrump (also Nye County) as a bedroom community for Las Vegas, makes for a logical three-county LMA." Dan Culbert, "Data Revision," *Economic Update*, Nevada Employment Security Division, 1st Quarter 1994, 7. According to Culbert, Reno, the other of the two major LMAs in Nevada, remained unchanged by the U.S. OMB reevaluation, and remains only Washoe County. *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup>"Economic Update," Nevada Employment Security Division, 1st Quarter 1994, 10–11.

<sup>59</sup>Strong economic growth coupled with declining income inequality last occurred in the United States in the 1960s. The Gini ratio is used by economists to measure the variance from the actual distribution of income against a perfectly egalitarian distribution of income. The lower the ratio, the more egalitarian the distribution; conversely, the higher the ratio the less egalitarian the distribution. From 1960 to 1992, the ratio was at its lowest in the late 1960s and peaked in 1990, subsiding some in 1992 and climbing once again in 1992. David Hage, "The Quest for Camelot," *U.S. News & World Report* (26 April 1993), 54. See also, Larry D. Hatfield, "Wages Erosion Frays White Collars," *San Francisco Examiner* (8 September 1992), A1. Hatfield discusses a report authored by Lawrence Mishel, Chief Economist at the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) and Jared Bernstein, a doctoral candidate in social welfare at Columbia University and published by the Economic Policy Institute, a nonprofit Washington, D.C. based think tank in 1992. The authors say, according to Hatfield, that the 1980s experienced a dramatic increase in the income gap between the rich and poor, reversing the diminution of income inequality which had been a trend for the previous three decades. Hereinafter cited as Hatfield, 8 September 1992.

<sup>60</sup>"Workers with Low Earnings: 1964 to 1990," *Current Population Reports*, Consumer Income, Series P-60, No. 178. U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, March 1992, 1–2, *ad passim*. The concept of a low earnings threshold was developed specifically for this study and is acknowledged by Census to be subjective but defined by Census as those who have annual earnings which cannot maintain a family of four above the poverty level. The definition includes "those who spend at least 50 weeks during the year at work or looking for work and who either worked thirty-five hours a week or more or worked fewer hours for nonvoluntary reasons." Only workers who are strongly attached to the labor force, as defined above, are considered in this report. The hourly threshold for 1979 was \$3.45 per hour and rose to \$6.10 per hour in 1990. The changes over time reflect price movements so that the amounts are actually equal in constant dollars and direct comparisons can be made. According to the Census, the price index used to adjust the thresholds is CPI-U-XI, which is experimental and slows the price rise compared to CPI-U index. "Use of the latter," says the Census, "would make the thresholds higher for later years and would increase the number of low-earner workers."

<sup>61</sup>"Low-Wage Workers Growing Rapidly," *American Demographics*, July 1992, 12. See also Hatfield, 8 September 1992. Hatfield relates that according to the EPI report cited above American wage earners have experienced a decade of erosion in real wages which, by the end of the decade, had spread to the college-educated, women and white collar workers. Hatfield reports that during the 1980s, the already low wages of low income male workers fell almost 16 percent while low income female workers' wages fell almost 7 percent. Female wages are lower than those for males to begin with. Wages fell at the same time that the nation experienced twenty-six consecutive quarters of growth from 1983–1989. One of the conceptual problems with the GNP and now the GDP (the GDP

replaced the GNP in 1991) is that neither addresses the *nature* of economic growth and the kinds of jobs created. According to Theresa Feren, NSWD Reno District Office Manager, anecdotal evidence from the NSWD Eligibility Certification Specialists' observations shows more middle class applicants for first-time assistance during the early 1990s, especially for medical assistance. Telephone conversation with Terry Feren, 23 April 1993.

<sup>62</sup>Feminist poverty literature ascribes the impoverishment of women to the oppression of women in society; poverty affects women more because women are more often at the bottom of the labor market. A corollary to this theme is the idea of female impoverishment as a function of the breakdown of the nuclear family. Private mutual economic support breaks down and women become the primary victims as child raising is strongly tied to child bearing. Staffan Marklund, "Structures of Modern Poverty," *Acta Sociologica*, 1990, (33), 2:129-130.

<sup>63</sup>"Occupations by Gender," *Economic Update*, Nevada Employment Security Division, 2nd Quarter, 1993, 9-10. See also, "Non Traditional Occupation Identification. State of Nevada, 1990 Nevada Census, Occupational Data by Sex," Nevada Employment Security Division, Employment Security Research, May 1993; and "Non Traditional Industrial Identification, State of Nevada, 1990 Nevada Census, Industrial Distribution of the Work Force by Sex," Nevada Employment Security Division, Employment Security Research, August 1993.

<sup>64</sup>U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States: 1992*, Table No. 66. "Families, by Number of Own Children Under 18 Years Old: 1970 to 1991," 112th Edition, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, 1992), 53.

<sup>65</sup>Sonya Ross, "Single-Parent Families Up," *Nevada Appeal* (14 September 1992), A8.

<sup>66</sup>*Census and You*, U.S. Bureau of the Census, November 1991, 10.

<sup>67</sup>Betty McNeal, 1990 *Census Extract from Summary Tape File 3A*, Table 3. "Income and Poverty Status in 1989: Nevada," (Carson City, Nevada: Nevada State Data Center) 7 May 1992, 3.

<sup>68</sup>Nevada Department of Data Processing system report for NSWD, WL00469-2, "Demographic Caretaker" Total Housing, AFDC Basic Cash Grants and AFDC-UP Cash Grants, run date 1 April 1994.

<sup>69</sup>*Reno Gazette Journal* (8 January 1992), 7A, from a report of the U.S. Federal Reserve Board, January 1992.

<sup>70</sup>*Sacramento Bee* (22 December 1991), 14.

<sup>71</sup>Dan Frost, "Nevada Without Gambling: Californians Are Flocking to Nevada in Search of Small-Town Calm," *American Demographics*, December 1990, 47. Frost quotes Maud Naroll, Nevada State Demographer, that one in four newcomers to Nevada comes from California.

<sup>72</sup>Anastassatos, 1 April 1993. For a full discussion of the wage survey methodology, see *Nevada Wages, 1993, An Occupational Wage Survey for Selected Nevada Industries and Geographic Areas* (Carson City: Nevada Employment Security Division, Employment Security Research, August 1993), 1-5.

<sup>73</sup>Las Vegas is also the fastest growing metropolitan area in the nation and has been since 1990. The area's population increased by 14 percent between 1 April 1990 and 1 July 1992 to 971,169. "Las Vegas is Nation's Fastest-Growing Metro Area," *Census and You*, Volume 29, No. 3, March 1994, 1. From 1 July 1992 to 1 July 1993, the state's population increased by 55,000; 76 percent of that growth occurred in Las Vegas. Nevada's 1993 rate of growth was four times the national average. Bill O'Driscoll, "Nevada Keeps on Growing at Fast Pace," *Reno Gazette-Journal* (13 November 1993), 1A.

<sup>74</sup>Population figures from Maud Naroll, "Nevada Population Estimates (1992) and Forecasts (1993-1997)," Nevada State Demographer, Bureau of Business and Economic Research, College of Business Administration, University of Nevada, Reno, 3 December 1993. Hereinafter cited as Naroll, December 1993. Caseload estimates for AFDC, Total Medicaid and Food Stamps from Department of Data Processing system report for Nevada State Welfare Division, #WL00427, run date 30 April 1994.

<sup>75</sup>*Nevada Wages, 1993, An Occupational Wage Survey for Selected Nevada Industries and Geographic Areas* (Carson City: Nevada Employment Security Division, Employment Security Research August 1993), 81-91. According to *Nevada Occupational Projections, 1991-1996* (Carson City: Nevada Employment Security Division, Employment Security Research, September 1992), 8-10, waitresses and waiters was the largest occupation in 1991 at 22,130 total employment and is projected to be the fastest growing category for 1991-1996. Almost 78 percent of that category is female. "Occupations by Gender," *Economic Update*, Nevada Employment Security Division, 2nd Quarter, 1993, 9.

<sup>76</sup>Telephone conversation with Mike Clarke, Labor Economist III, Nevada Employment Security Division, 20 April 1993, Carson City, Nevada. Hereinafter cited as Clarke, 20 April 1993.

<sup>77</sup>*Nevada Wages, An Occupational Wage Survey for Selected Nevada Industries and Geographic Areas*, (Carson City: Nevada Employment Security Division, Employment Security Research, Nevada, August 1993), 81–91.

<sup>78</sup>*Federal Register*, Vol. 58, No. 28, Friday, 12 February 1993, 8288. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Service's yearly poverty guideline is computed by multiplying the Consumer Price Index (CPI-U) by last year's poverty guideline. The guideline is a simplified version of that used by the U.S. Bureau of the Census to prepare its statistical estimates of the number of persons and families in poverty. The guidelines are printed each February in the *Federal Register* and become effective on the date of publication. For 1994, the poverty threshold for a family of four is \$14,800. *Federal Register*, Vol. 59, No. 28, Thursday, 10 February 1994, 6277. See fn 60 for a discussion of the nature of the currently used experimental CPI which slows the price rise, and hence slows the rise of the poverty line and deflates the total of those who fall below.

<sup>79</sup>Mike Clarke, "Determining the Poverty Line," *Economic Update*, 4th Quarter 1992 (Carson City, Nevada: Nevada Employment Security Division), 9.

<sup>80</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup>*Census and You*, November 1992, Volume 27, No. 11 (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census, U.S. Government Printing Office), 7.

<sup>82</sup>Nevada Economy, 4th Quarter, 1987," *Economic Update*, 4th Quarter, 1987, (Carson City, Nevada: Nevada Employment Security Division), 1.

<sup>83</sup>Clarke, 20 April 1993.

<sup>84</sup>Ed Vogel, "Unemployment Blamed on Growth," *Nevada Appeal* (3 November 1991), 1A, in which Vogel quotes Maud Naroll, Nevada State Demographer, as saying "People tend to follow jobs. Job growth has been one of the major driving factors in our population growth." See also, Ed Vogel, "Population of Nevada Sees Growth Slow," *Nevada Appeal* (1 November 1992), 1 + 12. Vogel quotes Maud Naroll, "Job growth is down and as a result the population growth slowed."

<sup>85</sup>Maud Naroll, "Percent Growth in Population, 1981–1992, Nevada State Estimates," Nevada State Demographer, Bureau of Business & Economic Research, College of Business Administration, University of Nevada, Reno, 28 October 1993.

<sup>86</sup>Clarke, 20 April 1993.

<sup>87</sup>*Ibid.* The number of hotel rooms in Las Vegas increased from 62,440 in 1988 to about 90,000 in 1994. 30,000 more hotel rooms are on the drawing boards. Clarke, 20 April 1993 and John Barbour, "Nevada Casinos: Resorting to New Risks," *Nevada Appeal* (6 March 1994), B8.

<sup>88</sup>Diane Nassir, "Program Analyses: CHAP, Disabled, Food Stamps, AFDC," NSWD/Research & Statistics, 18 February 1993. Disabled section, 5.

<sup>89</sup>For references in this paper to NSWD increases over time as well as projected growth, see Diane Nassir, "Change Over Time: Medicaid Eligibles (with Retros) Food Stamp (Participating Persons) and CSE," NSWD/Research & Statistics, 16 May 1994.

<sup>90</sup>Carey McWilliams, "Legalized Gambling Doesn't Pay," *The Nation*, vol. 171, no. 22, (25 January 1950), 482–3. For contemporary suicide rates, see *Nevada Health Profile*, 1993, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 15.

<sup>91</sup>For discussion on compulsive gambling and the possibility of interactive gambling at home via interactive television, on-time computer networks and telephones, see "Casinos Face Employee Gambling Problem," *Nevada Appeal* (29 April 1994), B6; Guy Webster, "Interactive Gambling Seeks to Prove Home Marketability," *Nevada Appeal* (9 May 1994), A8; "Nevada News Notes," Nevada Employment Security Division, Research Section, May 1994, 8. For commentary on the degrading effect casino gaming can have on irreplaceable cultural resources, see Keith Weldon Medley, "Big Gamble in The Big Easy," *Historic Preservation, The Magazine of the National Trust for Historic Preservation*, July/August 1994, 27–31, 92–94.

<sup>92</sup>Richard J. Barnet, "The End of Jobs, Employment is One Thing the Global Economy is Not Creating," *Harper's Magazine*, September 1993, 47.

<sup>93</sup>*Ibid.*, 52.

## NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

### VIEWS OF NEVADA CASINOS

These views of Reno and Las Vegas casinos in the 1950s are from the Lawton B. Kline Photograph Collection at the Nevada Historical Society. They were all produced and marketed as parts of sets of colored slides by Atkins Travel Slides, Inc.—“See the world at home.”

Kline, who taught Spanish in the foreign languages department at the University of Nevada, Reno from 1931 to 1969 (with time out for military service during World War II and to work on his doctorate at Stanford University), was an avid and talented amateur photographer who captured thousands of images of northern Nevada and the California Sierra Nevada, as well as of Mexico and other places he visited.

The Kline collection, which includes commercially-produced color slides he purchased in addition to the photographs he himself created, was donated to the Society shortly after his death in 1986.



The world-famous Reno Arch, with Harolds Club on the east side of Virginia Street, in the 1950s. The Smith family, the club's owners, pioneered the marketing of Nevada gaming as a fun-filled experience.

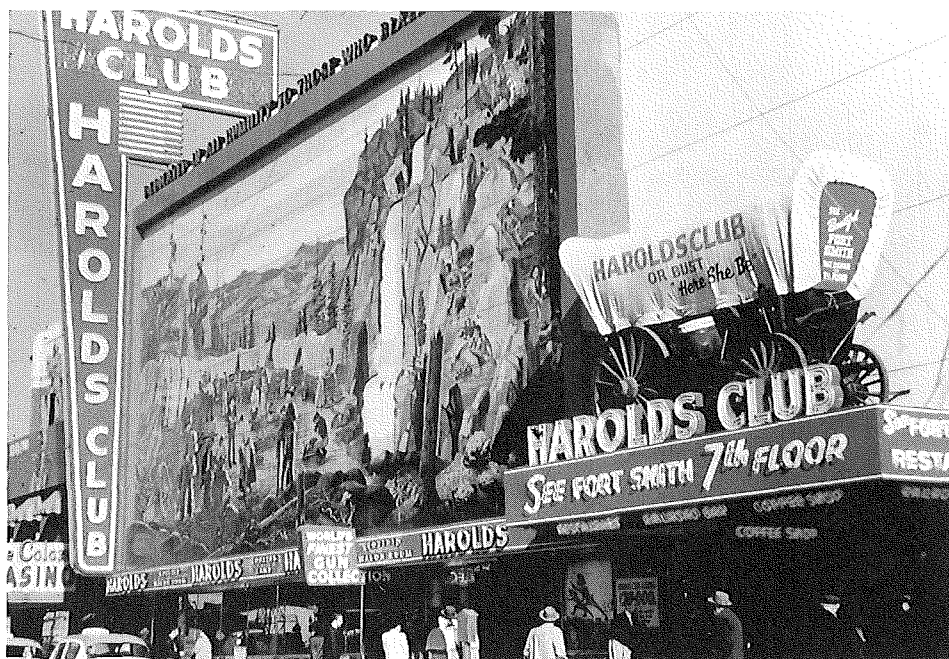


Harrah's genie, a light-hearted reference to the desert that ran counter to the Wild-West oriented images of most Reno clubs in the 1950s and '60s.



The Palace Club, at the corner of Commercial Row and Center Street, was already old in the 1950s, one of the casinos that had continued to operate even when gambling was illegal. The neon marquee was as fancy as it got.





More than any other casino in Nevada, Harolds Club has capitalized on the Wild-West theme. For many years a major firearms collection was on display, and the animated frontier mural still lends a touch of history to Virginia Street.



The Club Cal-Neva in 1950s Reno made a very straight-forward presentation on Virginia Street. The offices on the second floor were leased by attorneys and the Community Chest.



"Vegas Vic" still graces the Pioneer Club on Fremont Street in Las Vegas. Synonymous with "Glitter Gulch," he epitomizes the Wild-West theme that dominated southern Nevada marketing until after World War II.



Although a bit tawdry during the daytime, Fremont Street lit up the sky after dark.



Binion's Horseshoe Club continues to prosper today and has taken over and covered up much of the clutter of its earlier neighbors on Fremont Street.





One of the earliest resort hotels on the Las Vegas Strip, Walter Clark's Desert Inn in the 1950s embodied modern design and a glamorous image.

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Hang Tough! Grant Sawyer: An Activist in the Governor's Mansion.* By Grant Sawyer, interviews conducted by Gary E. Elliott, narrative composed by R. T. King. (Reno: University of Nevada Oral History Program, 1993. xxiv + 256 pp, illustrations, appendix, notes, index.)

Perhaps a word is in order as to how this oral history was put together. During a nine-month period in 1991, former Governor Grant Sawyer of Nevada was interviewed by Gary E. Elliott, a history instructor at Southern Nevada Community College. Before the interviews Elliott concluded extensive research on his subject including having access to Sawyer's private papers. These interviews produced thirty-two tapes of conversation, and the transcriptions made from those tapes were twelve hundred pages long. These transcriptions were then "composed" by Robert Thomas King into a first person account by Sawyer, approximately one-fifth of the length of the original. As King puts it, "Throughout, I have interpreted Sawyer's speech as faithfully as possible consistent with the aim of composing a narrative from the elements of the interviews, but the reader is advised that these are rarely Sawyer's words precisely as spoken." (p. xiii) King imposed clarity and order on the original transcripts, while endeavoring to remain true to the spirit of what was being said. Sawyer read the finished manuscript and asserted "that it accurately represents the content of the interviews from which it is drawn." (p. xiv) The final product is ideally the autobiography of Grant Sawyer which he would have written if he had ever gotten around to it. In this reviewer's estimation what has been produced is a coherent, eminently readable and entertaining narrative.

Born in Twin Falls, Idaho in 1918, Sawyer grew up in that state. He attended and graduated from the University of Nevada, however, and attended George Washington University law school under the aegis of Senator Patrick McCarran, a man whom he came to honor and respect. Sawyer served four years in the army in World War II, and, after graduating from law school, was elected District Attorney of Elko County. Following a brief stint as a member of the University of Nevada Board of Regents he rather daringly ran for Governor of Nevada in 1958, still only thirty-nine years of age. His contest was waged "against the establishment," and he won. He served two terms as governor and

was by far the most liberal occupant of that office in recent memory. In speaking of his beliefs during these years, Sawyer summed up much of his political credo in words unusual from a politician: "Even in those days I was more concerned about the real enemy within—police state tactics, the power of the FBI, the American people being disfranchised by their own government—than I was about communists. Senator Joe McCarthy's witch hunts, and J. Edgar Hoover, and the secret government that was controlling our lives were what truly troubled me." (p. 188)

Sawyer is proud of his advocacy as governor of civil rights and civil liberties. He used the considerable powers of his office to prod casinos, hotels and other businesses to offer equal accommodations and employment opportunities to minorities. His commitment to civil rights and civil liberties is typified by his long time membership in both the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Sawyer was also determined that Nevada would have meaningful gambling regulation. "I wanted the state perceived as a clean, progressive, and tough enforcer of the law," (p. 86). Under his leadership, an independent State Gaming Control Commission was set up in 1959 which soon imposed a "black book" designed to keep Nevada free of sinister underworld elements. Surprisingly, many of Sawyer's efforts ran afoul of the federal government. He accuses both Federal Bureau of Investigation chief J. Edgar Hoover and United States Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy of using "Nazi" tactics to harass Nevada gambling out of existence. His public agitation over the popular Hoover's illegal tactics probably was an important reason for his being defeated for a third term in 1966.

Although Sawyer was liberal by Nevada political standards, he was a strong advocate for the state's interests. As governor, he was most accessible to the people, although much of this was made possible by Nevada's then minuscule population. When it came to pork, he could be as grabby as anyone, urging, for example, the importation of Columbia River water to the Great Basin: "The Columbia River dumps millions of acre feet into the Pacific while Nevada and California are starving for water." (p. 112) He would like the sale of federally controlled lands to the state and its people. He came over time to advocate the interests of emergent Las Vegas, and was a strong supporter of the United States Supreme Court decisions which forced states to reapportion both houses of the legislature according to population.

After his defeat in 1966, Sawyer was "physically, emotionally, and mentally exhausted." He never again ran for elective office, although he almost certainly could have been elected to the United States Senate. Instead he undertook a lucrative law practice as a partner in the Lionel Sawyer & Collins firm, and remained influential as an insider in Democratic party politics. He is surprisingly candid in this oral history about the people he admires (Eleanor Roosevelt, Richard Bryan, Harry Reid, among many) and those he dislikes (Paul Laxalt, J.

Edgar Hoover, Robert Kennedy, Richard Nixon—"everything he did revolted me"). Sawyer seems relaxed while relating his narrative, too sharp edged perhaps to be described as mellow, but certainly with a lively sense of humor. He has had a wonderful life and looks back on it with considerable perspective and perception. His record as governor was exemplary, and he was (and is) sensitive to the great changes of direction taken by his state during his service to it. It is an absorbing, quite informative autobiographical narrative and one of the very best to come out of the University of Nevada's oral history project. He adds considerably to our knowledge of Nevada's recent political and gambling history.

Jerome E. Edwards  
University of Nevada, Reno

*The Gentle Giant: How Jim Joyce Helped Shape Nevada Politics for a Generation.* Edited with an introduction by Marilee Joyce. (Las Vegas: Nevada Publications, 1994. 160 pp, illustrations, index.)

Nevada has alternately benefited and suffered from a long political tradition of machine operators or "men behind the scenes." During the nineteenth century, William Sharon, and the *Big Fours* of California and Nevada, were the mining state's lords and masters. In the twentieth century, they were followed into power by machines headed by mining operator and banker, George Wingfield, then Senator Pat McCarran. All of these men have received considerable attention from historians, but we know much less about those who have wielded power and influence, and how they have wielded it, since McCarran died in 1954. Their number has included editors and publishers (Hank Greenspun was the most powerful of many), gaming moguls (most recently Steve Wynn of the Mirage, Treasure Island, and the Golden Nugget), and political consultants such as Sig Rogich and Jim Joyce, who have owned or have been affiliated with major advertising agencies. It is not too soon to begin putting them in perspective and context, although the gray areas will outnumber the black-and-white for a very long time.

*The Gentle Giant* is not an attempt to fill in those gray areas, or even to explain the importance of the outstanding political consultant and lobbyist of his time. Nor is it meant to be. Marilee Joyce, the subject's daughter, who followed in her father's large footsteps as a University of Nevada, Reno journalism graduate and reporter, has put together an enjoyable, affectionate collection of reminiscences of one of Nevada's most respected power-brokers. The writers, all friends and/or

colleagues of Joyce, constitute a who's who of Nevada politics, business, law, and journalism. They include former Senator Howard Cannon, whom Joyce served as a press secretary and campaign consultant; Senators Harry Reid and Richard Bryan, the latter elected student body president at UNR with Joyce managing his campaign; Representative Jim Bilbray, Governor Bob Miller, former Governor Mike O'Callaghan, legislators, businessmen, journalists, and fellow consultants. They range from eulogist to witty storyteller, but they have combined to paint a portrait of a man who knew how to use power, and wanted to use it in the best possible way.

Those who admire Joyce and others in his line of work will like much of what they read here. The authors knew Joyce from his youth, from his days as a university student in Reno, a reporter and editor in Las Vegas, an aide to Cannon, and a political consultant. The man they depict comes across as enormously likable and caring, fun-loving and funny, yet serious about what he did. Joyce helped elect some of the most important politicians of the last thirty years, most notably Cannon, and many of the Democratic legislators from southern Nevada. Joyce himself lobbied many important pieces of legislation through Carson City, including the law that permits the practice of acupuncture. Joyce's accomplishments also attest to his social conscience: For example, Lieutenant Governor Sue Wagner recounts how, when she was a legislator, Joyce helped her pass an increase in marriage license fees, and thus finance shelters for battered wives, by persuading the wedding chapel operators for whom he lobbied not to oppose the bill. The stories abound of the good that Joyce did for his state and for his friends.

It is also worth noting that while he certainly was a "player," Joyce never seemed to become cynical about the political system. More than anything else, he was realistic, as in the account of his appearance before a UNR journalism class. He told the students that the most important thing for a journalist to have is financial independence, so that he or she has the freedom to write the truth. In that field, as Joyce showed in politics, there is room for idealism, but a grasp of reality is at least as important.

Given the amount of praise that Joyce receives in these pages, it would be easy to criticize this book if it had been intended as a critical history or biography. It is not an analysis, but a tribute. It does not weigh the other side, and clearly there is another side—if not about Joyce, then about his time and place. Why did an unelected lobbyist shape Nevada, or why should he have been able to do so? What deals are unknown to us, and what was their impact? Was the reason for Jim Joyce's success the man, the times, the circumstances, or a combination of all three? Why did he, as the authors attest, have so much power in the legislature?

These are questions for the historian to try to answer. But when that happens, or when anyone studies the recent history of Nevada, this book will be useful, if not indispensable, to understanding one of the key players of the time. What this book is meant to do, it does exceedingly well. Marilee Joyce and the authors

have certainly achieved their goal of painting an interesting portrait of a fascinating, admirable figure in recent Nevada history. It is frequently amusing, at times maudlin, undeniably and often irresistibly interesting, and attractively produced. There is a lot to this package and this man, and a lot that leaves us wanting to know more. It is not hard to imagine that Jim Joyce would like it that way—and probably would very gently and quietly be lobbying a Nevada historian to look into it.

Michael S. Green  
Columbia University

*The Temptations of St. Ed and Brother S.* By Frank Bergon. (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1993, 305 pp.)

Readers of fiction often wonder whether the setting and context of a story is factual or part of the author's imaginary world. Students of history know that good historical fiction is set in accurate context. *The Temptations of St. Ed and Brother S* by Frank Bergon is a work of fiction set in contemporary Nevada. Although contemporary, the novel is similar to a work of historical fiction because setting and context play fundamental roles. The setting is today's southern Nevada and the context is the struggle of a tiny monastery against the "Shoshone Mountain" project. The Bureau of Land Management is determined to incorporate the monastery's land into the "Shoshone Mountain" project for storage of nuclear waste.

The novel's roots go back deeply into the Middle Ages, even to the heroic age of the early Church fathers. I review it as a medieval historian who is a long term resident of Nevada: This is not a literary review. In a superb blend of the modern and the medieval, Bergon sets his tale at a Trappist monastery in the Nevada desert, south of Warm Springs in the Kawich Range, a few miles north of the Test Site and about 200 miles north of Las Vegas. Like the first Cistercian monastery of Citeaux built on *terra deserta* in the twelfth century, the monastery was placed in the solitude of the desert in an effort to escape the materialism of the modern world. Like the founders of Citeaux who sought remote and unwanted land—"Citeaux" means "cistern"—Father Edward St. John Arrizabalaga, simply called St. Ed, chose his remote desert site so that he might practice his monastic life free from the world and its distractions and, like his forebearers, draw like-minded men to join him. He attracts few followers, but one does accept the rigors and challenges of monastic life in the Nevada desert: This is Brother

Simeon, known as Brother S. Also like their monastic forebearers, they will make this deserted and unwanted land bloom by their hard physical labors and by their love of God. The two men struggle with their monastic vocations, with their spiritual quest for God, with the temptations of a world which will not leave them alone, and with the BLM.

St. Ed soon learns that it is not easy to build a monastic community. He must continually make compromises. For example, as a condition for allowing him to establish a monastery in Nevada, the Bishop of Reno-Las Vegas requires that he serve as pastor of a small church in Warm Springs. The pastoral role clashes with the monastic life and St. Ed tries his best to wriggle free of his assignment at St. Antony's church.

He faces problems identical to his forebearers and some new and troubling ones. To save his monastery St. Ed must fight the bishop who, after a lucrative offer from the BLM, urges St. Ed to "cooperate" with the BLM by abandoning the monastery. Battling with the bishop causes St. Ed to understand why medieval monasteries fought for freedom from episcopal authority—bishops are too political and too attached to the world to leave monasteries unmolested. Medieval monasteries had to defend their land against the encroachments of powerful feudal lords, so too St. Ed struggles against Nevada's great feudal landlord, the BLM. Facing a late twentieth-century problem, he battles Nathan Spock, the suave, predatory talk-show host from the big city of Las Vegas. In his characterization of Spock—the Geraldo Rivera of southern Nevada—Bergon superbly illustrates the decline of journalistic ethics by demonstrating the drive to produce the desired "story" at the expense of the truth. Spock cannot begin to imagine that anyone would choose the monastic life. He twists his interview with St. Ed to make him appear a fool and a deviant. The interview is a contest between appearance and reality, where St. Ed, wise and dedicated in reality, but inexperienced before the media, appears the fool and Spock, the falsifier and deviant, appears wise. Appearance wins because the public really has no way to discern the truth. This scene is a brilliant commentary on the contemporary media, especially talk shows.

Like the famous temptations of St. Antony, greatest of the early desert fathers, St. Ed struggles with the temptations of the flesh in order to live his life according to the Order of the Cistercians of the Strict Observance, or Trappist. St. Ed's temptation comes in the person of Amy, an attractive BLM ranger who has come to oppose her employer's nuclear waste project and who is strangely attracted to the monastery. One of the compromises St. Ed must make with the modern world to strengthen his monastery against BLM aggression is to accept some novices whose vocations do not appear sound and who St. Ed might not have accepted if he did not need numbers to protect his monastery. He accepts Amy, a woman, as a full-fledged monk. This did not occur at Citeaux! But Bergon demonstrates his remarkable knowledge of medieval and modern monasticism because "co-ed" monasteries did exist in the Middle Ages with each gender in

neighboring but separate monasteries, and they exist now in a late twentieth century version with the sexes living together (e.g. the Nada monastery in Colorado). The new postulants make their first vows at the doomed monastery appropriately on the Feast of the Transfiguration because their transformation into monks is underway. It is significant that this feast occurs on August 6, the anniversary date of Hiroshima.

Medieval misogyny appears too, in the form of an anti-social desert dweller named Straightgut who also is attracted to the monastery but who cannot abide women. Straightgut is so violently opposed to women in general and Amy in particular that he is driven insane when St. Ed takes the extraordinary step of naming Amy abbot of the monastery so that he can devote his time to fighting the forces arrayed against his beloved community. Did women ever hold the abbot's power over men in the Middle Ages? Yes, though rarely.

Bergon paints a fascinating portrait of contemporary Nevada in this novel. In addition to the characters already mentioned one finds peyote-smoking Dale Mosho and iron-willed June Mosho of the Shoshone tribe, slick public relations experts, topless dancers, and physicians more interested in their fees than in their patients. Hot springs serve as the Great Basin's answer to California hot tubs; popular music of the '50s and '60s provides inspiration to saint and sinner alike. Through it all Bergon provides a rich medieval imagery and frequent references to major works of the monastic tradition, particularly the fourteenth-century *Cloud of Unknowing*.

In *The Temptations of St. Ed and Brother S* Frank Bergon creates a wonderfully entertaining novel in a real setting and in a real context. The desert setting is precise and so well described that any one familiar with Nevada can easily visualize St. Ed's monastery and its environment. Frank Bergon, who hails from Ely, obviously knows the Nevada environment well. It is clear that Bergon has gone to great lengths to make his description of monastic life as accurate as possible. Readers may rest assured that his knowledge of monasticism is excellent. The hero, St. Ed, knows monastic history and the great texts of spirituality in intimate detail. This medieval historian has found no inaccuracy worth quibbling over but it is odd that the author has St. Ed place the famous Trappist monastery of St. Joseph in Spencer, Massachusetts, north of Boston, when it is west of Boston, near Worcester. I mention this only because Bergon is very careful about geography and as a professor of English at Vassar College he can drive to Spencer as quickly as St. Ed could reach his pastoral duties in Warm Springs. Do St. Ed and his companions win their war with the BLM? For the answer you must read the novel yourself. For me this novel is a wonderful blend of medieval and modern set in the always intriguing Nevada desert. It is a significant contribution to Nevada and Western literature.

Francis X. Hartigan  
*University of Nevada, Reno*



*The Metropolitan Frontier; Cities in the Modern American West.* By Carl Abbott.  
(Tucson and London: University of Arizona Press, 1993. xxiii + 244 pp,  
illustrations, notes, bibliography, index.)

For several decades students of the American West have repeatedly been admonished to consider the impact of urbanization. One of academia's promising younger urban historians, Carl Abbott of Portland State University, drives home this idea one more time in this illuminating study of the sixteen western states since the Second World War.

Although he tells a familiar story, Abbott does it with flair, presenting a mosaic that is rich with the stuff that makes for good history: a command of the essential demographics, an understanding of the national and international context, sufficient local lore to distinguish between urban environments, and an impressive research base of primary documents and secondary literature.

By deftly drawing upon illuminating local examples, Abbott describes how the Second World War unleashed a period of intensified urban growth which has yet to run its course. In the half-century since the outbreak of war, the urban population of the West grew from eleven million to sixty three million. By 1990 80 percent of westerners lived within the confines of 101 metropolitan areas. This enormous expansion placed the West, for the first time, in the position of creating new cultural models rather than emulating those imported from the East. Prominent among these was a decentralized urban form built upon expressways, an obsession with the automobile, a preference for suburban life styles, and an aversion to a dominating central city core. The resulting "multi-centered city" has come to dominate the western states. It has also produced major changes in the relationship between city and the hinterlands. Although a century-old urban network based upon railroad lines remains, new alignments established by the Interstate Highway System and commercial airlines have produced major changes in traditional relationships.

It is regrettable to those readers specifically interested in Nevada that Abbott touches only lightly upon the eclipse of Reno by what he describes as the "Sprawl City of Las Vegas." But his viewpoint is clear. Abbott defines Las Vegas as a prototype of the new "vernacular environments" that have developed in the West since 1940 in response to "the tastes and demands of middle Americans, with only sporadic and often *post facto* attention to comprehensive planning and urban design." While he describes Las Vegas, along with Los Angeles, as the harbinger of a dominant new urban form, he relegates Reno to the role of a smaller regional metropolis, destined to emulate rather than lead. He makes clear, however, that both Nevada cities grew as a result of massive infusions of federal defense dollars, tourism, and a dominant pro-business political climate. Las Vegas, however, had a much more aggressive local leadership which took advantage of such disparate elements as Nellis Air Force Base, the Basic Mag-

nesium plant, the nuclear test site, legalized gambling, Hoover Dam, and, especially, a fortuitous location in the heart of the sunbelt in close proximity to Los Angeles.

This is a solid scholarly effort that will be of particular interest to urban and western historians. It offers both the advantages of a concisely written survey and the limitations that come from the necessity to generalize about an enormously complex topic. It should be read in conjunction with the spate of urban biographies that has appeared in recent years. *Metropolitan Frontier* will also be of special utility to those many embattled state and local politicians, frustrated urban and regional planners, and determined economic development executives who are dealing on a daily basis with the consequences of the urban transformation of the American West.

Richard O. Davies  
*University of Nevada, Reno*

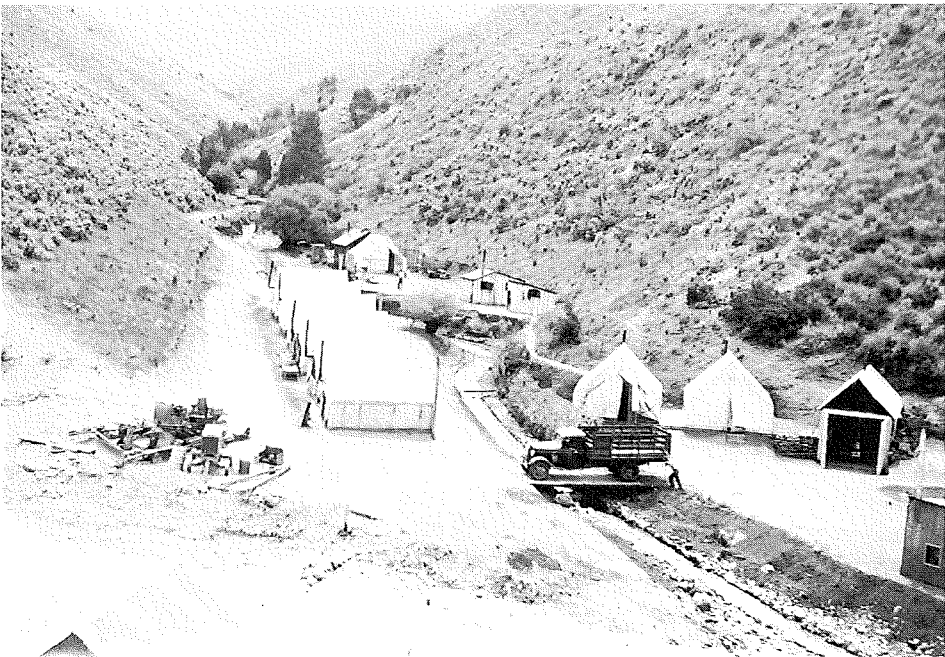
# NEW RESOURCE MATERIALS

*Nevada Historical Society*

## CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS PHOTOGRAPHS

During the Depression years of the 1930s, the federal government established some two dozen Civilian Conservation Corps camps in Nevada. The personnel of these camps, which were run by one of the major New Deal relief agencies, engaged in a variety of construction and natural resource management projects.

Recently, Benjamin Bedzis, now a resident of Tacoma, Washington, donated a collection of photographs taken by him and other workers assigned to the CCC camp in Paradise Valley, Humboldt County. The pictures, all from 1938, depict the Buckskin Canyon sub-camp, buildings at the Buckskin Mine, road construction activity, an open-range rodeo, and scenes at McDermitt and the adjoining Fort McDermitt Indian Reservation.



The Buckskin Canyon Camp. (*Benjamin Bedzis Collection, Nevada Historical Society*)

We thank Mr. Bedzis for these images, which substantially supplement the pictorial records we have of CCC operations in Nevada.

#### JAMES NYE PAPERS

The Society has acquired a number of additions to its collection of personal papers of James W. Nye, Nevada's territorial governor. Dating from 1861 and 1862, these consist of deeds and legal agreements (relating principally to mining claims and property at Aurora, Nevada), lists of clothing sent to a Chinese laundry in Carson City, and a handwritten "Memorandum of Deeds, Mortgages, etc." listing legal documents held by Nye, or to which he was a party, on December 24, 1862. These documents increase the significance of the Society's Nye papers, which, together with his official papers at the Nevada State Library and Archives in Carson City, provide much of our knowledge of Nye's activities while he was chief executive of Nevada Territory.

#### ORVILLE O'BANNON LETTERS

During the early and middle 1860s, Orville B. O'Bannon, formerly an inhabitant of Kentucky, resided in Star City, Nevada, one of the principal camps of the booming Humboldt mining region in northern Nevada. He apparently did some mining, or at least was involved in mining speculations, worked as a lawyer in the local courts, and for a time was employed, possibly as a reporter, by the *Humboldt Register* in neighboring Unionville. He may also have been the "C. B. O'Bannon" who has been credited with naming the Winnemucca Mining District in 1863, which, in turn, apparently led to the name Winnemucca being attached to the Humboldt County community a few years later.

The Society has received, as a gift from Mrs. John Marshall Prewitt of Lexington, Kentucky, two substantial letters written by O'Bannon to relatives and friends in Kentucky. In these communications, he discusses living conditions in Star City, his legal work, Indian hostilities, the mining fortunes of the area, and problems the Civil War has caused. The letters provide us with a new personal view of Star City, a major boomtown of which little has survived, and with important information about one of that ephemeral camp's more prominent citizens.

Eric Moody  
*Manuscript Curator*

*University of Nevada, Reno*  
*Special Collections Department*

The Special Collections Department recently received a gift of the papers and photographs of Louise Aloys Smith, the first woman elected to public office in

Pershing County. Aloys, as she prefers to be called, grew up in Lovelock, where her father Eugene Neeland Smith was a physician and owner of the town's hospital. Her mother, Kathleen Frances O'Sullivan Smith was active in politics and a member of the Nevada Democratic Central Committee. Aloys served in the Women's Army Corps during World War II, then returned home to Lovelock where she worked at the local drug store. At the urging of the central committee and her mother, she agreed to run for the assembly and served two terms, in 1949 and 1951. She was speaker pro tem in 1951, the first woman to hold that position. She chaired the Veterans' Committee and was a member of the Social Welfare Committee. The Smith collection documents her service with the army and the assembly and includes army orders and official papers, correspondence, reports, legislative materials, and photographs.

Nineteenth-century women's diaries and journals are highly sought after as documentation of women's lives. The Department recently acquired the journal of Ollie M. Walters of Mason Valley. Ollie, wife of James Walters, made daily entries for the period of 1891–1899. The Walters lived with their children Flora, Amy, Jack and Clarence on a farm near Silver Creek, Oregon, until 1893, when they packed a wagon with their belongings and moved to Mason Valley to operate a ranch and trade in a variety of goods. Ollie's entries chronicle events in their lives and in nearby communities; travel to Nevada; food (meals and bread) and goods sold to neighboring Paiute Indians; the use of the Paiutes as laborers; and events in the lives of the Barrett, Pursel, and Batchelder families of Mason Valley.

Susan Searcy  
*Manuscript Curator*

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# NEVADA HISTORICAL SOCIETY



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Founded in 1904, the Nevada Historical Society seeks to advance the study of the heritage of Nevada. The Society publishes scholarly studies, indexes, guidebooks, bibliographies, and the *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly*; it collects manuscripts, rare books, artifacts, historical photographs and maps, and makes its collections available for research; it maintains a museum at its Reno facility; and it is engaged in the development and publication of educational materials for use in the public schools.