



Perspective

By JAMIE BUCKINGHAM

Gambling

Claude Kirk, former governor of Florida and now once again campaigning for that seat, is saying the best way for Florida to overcome her economic troubles is to legalize casino gambling. Such a move, he says, would lower taxes, pour money into the state's coffers, and generally take care of all our troubles.

The urge to be fleeced is deep-seated in many Americans. There literally are millions of people who can't wait to go to Las Vegas or the newest gambling mecca in Atlantic City to rid themselves of their money. Kirk — also known as Claudius Maximus — seems to think our state government should take advantage of this and channel some of that "easy money" into the state treasury — perhaps to pay welfare for the unemployed or hire social workers to care for hungry children.

The records indicate that it is not the state which prospers — it is the

operators of the legal casinos. In fact, figures just released by the new Resorts International Hotel Casino in Atlantic City show the slot machines and playing tables strip the suckers of their cash at the incredible rate of an \$18 an hour LOSS. For a man who works hard at a \$4.50-an-hour trade, that just doesn't add up to good sense.

Despite the rare player who wins, the over-all average shows a slot machine player loses an average of \$18.64-an-hour — while the person playing the gaming tables loses an average of \$17.73 per hour.

In the first six days of operations, about 75,000 people a day fed the slot machines and gambling tables. This is many times more than a sucker every minute.

Incredible.

Even more incredible to me is that a former governor could actually encourage his voters to throw away their money at such an astonishing

rate. Pocket cash is extremely short these days; and to have a slot machine beckoning the tired breadwinner to come in and lose his morning wages in one hour just doesn't seem to be a good substitute for the sales tax.

It is really puzzling how New Jersey and Nevada conclude that they are contributing to the public good by setting up legal betting parlors to relieve people of money that would otherwise go into banks, groceries, Red Cross or college educations. It is even more puzzling how a supposedly intelligent Floridian could suggest it as the "best way" for our state.

Even though there are millions of Americans seemingly thirsting for the chance to throw away their money, the government should not be in the business of helping them do it. Much less share in the profit of these ill-gotten gains.