

The Region

In Summary

Atlantic City Getting Ready To Roll Them Bones

It's a fairly safe bet that the 10-year battle to bring legal gambling to the East Coast will end in success next Friday when the first dice are thrown in Atlantic City. The Resorts International Hotel last week was granted a temporary casino license by New Jersey's Casino Control Commission, which speeded up the process to give the down-at-the-heels resort a chance to cash in on the summer tourist trade. All that is needed now is a certificate of operation, regarded as a formality.

Resorts International will have the play to itself for at least a year. The next casino is not expected to open until late in 1979. But competition with Las Vegas is inevitable.

For the state, legal gambling is expected to raise as much as \$4 million in revenues in the first year. By 1985, Trenton hopes to realize \$35 million to \$40 million a year from 10 casinos. The money is to be used to help the destitute elderly pay for rent and utilities.

The large unanswered question is whether organized crime, certainly no stranger to New Jersey, can be kept out of the operations. The state seems certainly to be trying. Resorts International, for example, will not receive a permanent license until all of its 800 employees have been investigated.

Westport Gambles On Apartments

Westport, Conn., choosing the lesser of two nuisances, approved a zoning change last week that will permit construction of its first apartment houses.

The immediate impact won't be great. Fewer than 30 low-rise units can be built soon, and the rents (perhaps \$600 for a one-bedroom apartment) should attract the kind of people who can afford to improve their backhand.

However, the long-range possibilities are something else. As many as 30 parcels of open land along Route 1 could be used for multifamily housing if the owners obtained changes from commercial to apartment zoning.

Opponents of such development contended during the five years the change was debated that this could bring in enough apartment-dwellers to alter the character of the town. Although the population has tripled in three decades (to 29,300), Westport is still a model of suburban, one-family-home affluence (per capita income in 1975: \$10,308). And, while such feelings are not publicly expressed in Westport because of the racial implications, there has been



Downtown Westport traffic.

apprehension that allowing any apartments could lead to apartments with subsidized, low-income tenants.

In approving the zoning change, voters at the representative Town Meeting last week decided that these possible results were preferable to the certain alternative: more commercial development along the five-mile strip of Route 1, already so dense with stores and offices that traffic jams sometimes approach big-city proportions.

Last week's vote applied to only two sites — one of which contains older retail buildings that would have to be demolished before apartment construction could begin — but the debate was clearly about the larger future:

"Do we have any assurance," asked Donald S. Levy, a town official, "that newcomers will support the excellence in our schools and the other fine qualities that have made this such a special town?"

"We must reduce the scale of commercial development," Selectman Jacqueline P. Henegge countered, "or Westport shall die of asphyxiation, traffic congestion or just plain bad temper."

Jackson High Must Integrate, but How?

Of 2,530 students at Andrew Jackson High in Queens, all but one are non-white or Hispanic. And so in April 1977, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People filed suit seeking to force authorities to bring the school into line with other Queens schools where the racial mix is not so lopsided. Last week a Federal court so ordered, but that is unlikely to be the

final word on the issue. The New York City Board of Education, which will appeal the ruling, contended that the transfer of white students to the school would upset the delicate racial balance at other Queens schools now integrated. This could accelerate the exodus of white families from the borough, making integration all the more difficult.

Schools Chancellor Irving Anker argued that Jackson's imbalance was beyond his control because of demographic patterns. "I can't keep mixing the white chips with the black chips," he said, "if they keep taking the white chips away."

In the middle of the suit, the N.A.A.C.P. sought a way out of this difficulty by moving to have nine nearby, mostly white Nassau County communities help integrate the school (Jackson is a mile from the Nassau line). In his decision, Judge John F. Dooling Jr. ruled out the busing of white students from Nassau — to the relief of Nassau officials as well as other suburbs across the country — but apparently largely because of a technicality; he felt the issue had been raised too late.

The judge's decision ordered the board to present a plan in 45 days that would alter the racial composition of Jackson High to approximate the overall Queens ratio of 48 percent white and 52 percent black students. Judge Dooling called unconstitutional the present plan under which Queens schools having more than 50 percent white pupils would keep their white majorities until 1985. Because the decision most likely would involve the busing of white students, Queens communities can be expected to object vigorously.

As for the N.A.A.C.P., it was satisfied with the ruling. But the concept of busing between counties was not dismissed. "We don't feel," said James I. Meyerson, an association lawyer, "that the decision forecloses Nassau's inclusion in the future."

Jersey's New Worry — Mercury Poison

Cancer-conscious New Jersey, already concerned about the state's high rate of toxic chemical pollutants, has something new to worry about — extensive mercury contamination in the Hackensack Meadows.

The saturation was disclosed last week with the start of a trial against six alleged polluters, past and present owners of a mercury processing plant and its 40-acre site in Wood-Ridge. The suit, brought by the state's Department of Environmental Protection, asks the defendants to pay for a cleanup.

The state charges that the plant, demolished in 1974, discharged at least 300 tons of the metal and its byproducts onto the land near the plant over 36 years. The contamination, it is said, leached into a waterway that flows through marshland in the Meadows, which is about to undergo large-scale development.

Although there appears to be no present danger to the thousands of people who live, work and fish in the area — preliminary tests indicate that the contamination has not yet been absorbed into the biological food chain in serious amounts — scientists worry about the long-term impact.

Aside from the danger of mercury absorption in the food chain, there is concern that the metal, if disturbed by bulldozers, for example, might vaporize in the atmosphere. And there is apprehension that the inorganic mercury might be transformed into methyl mercury. Inorganic mercury, when ingested, can damage the kidneys and central nervous system. Methyl mercury, produced from the inorganic metal by microorganisms in sediments, is far more serious. It can cause paralysis, blindness and death. So far, methyl mercury has not been detected.

Misusing \$245,000 Is Not a Crime

There was no question that Edwin M. Schwenk had mishandled funds of the Suffolk County Republican Committee. On the other hand, the prosecution did not prove that he had deliberately, and with criminal intent, used some of the money for himself and his business.

Citing this distinction, Judge John A. Gallucci last week found the former county Republican chairman not guilty of second-degree grand larceny. One of the more sensational recent cases involving a Long Island Republican thus ended in a scolding about "wrongful" use of funds and "breach of responsibility" — which Mr. Schwenk, blowing a kiss to the bench, accepted with the happiness of a man who had just been facing a possible seven years in prison.

During his 10 years as Republican chairman, ending in February 1977, Mr. Schwenk transferred \$2.7 million in party funds to his personal account in the Marine Midland Bank. District Attorney Henry O'Brien, a Democrat, obtained an indictment last summer charging that \$245,000 had been used for Mr. Schwenk's private expenses or for his Southampton dairy business.

Republicans contended that the entire investigation was politically motivated and that Mr. O'Brien had withheld evidence that would have shown Mr. Schwenk's innocence. Mr. O'Brien, who was defeated for re-election last November, denies both accusations.

Daniel Lewis and Milton Leebaw

The First Casino Is Officially Set to Open This Week

Atlantic City Passes Go But Will It Collect \$200?

By ALVIN MAURER

Atlantic City's 10-year-old dream of a renaissance via roulette and other legalized games of chance will become a reality this week when the Resorts International Hotel opens the nation's first gambling casino outside Nevada. But excitement and expectation are tempered, at least in official quarters, by a growing apprehension. A city of 43,000 people is suddenly to become a city, in effect, of 443,000, and those responsible for health, safety, transportation, accommodations, are not certain they are prepared for the change.

There is a recurring nightmare of a huge traffic jam that might overwhelm the three bridges linking the island with the mainland and extend back 50 miles on the Garden State Parkway.

There is a fear that private autos will block streets, many of them narrow and dead ends, preventing fire trucks, ambulances and patrol cars from getting through.

There is a general uneasiness that an old, small city four and a half miles long and a half mile wide simply cannot accommodate the 300,000 autos and 400,000 people that officials estimate will go to Atlantic City next weekend. The pollution and unsanitary conditions alone could be enormous.

Thus 18 months after voters in a statewide referendum approved casino gambling for the shore resort and a year after a Washington consulting firm was hired for \$500,000 to set up a master plan to help Atlantic City cope with the new situation, there are still serious questions about its preparedness.

On the whole, however, the city's officials, who had been critical of the Casino Control Commission's deliberate pace in granting a license to Resorts International, believe they at least will be able to handle the crowds.

The police force has been augmented and extra medical personnel will be on duty. Inspector John Pasquale has worked out a plan that he hopes will keep the traffic moving and the streets unclogged. Signs will be posted on the main arteries into the city directing motorists into various traffic patterns. In fact, an announcement late last week by Col. Clinton L. Pagano

Sr., head of the state police, that motorists would be turned away if it became apparent the city had all it could handle drew an angry response from city officials. They were concerned that the publicity about congestion might keep the crowds down. The city has 35,000 to 40,000 parking places. In addition, Resorts has room for 4,300 cars.

While all the fresh money was being counted on to pump new life into the city's long-sagging economy, the immediate impact on most of the year-round residents is expected to be virtually nil. Blacks, Hispanic people and elderly Jews, who largely account for an unemployment rate that reached 26 percent last winter, were still uncertain about what the casino future held for them. There were charges last Friday by citizens' groups of racial discrimination in the filling of the first of tens of thousands of jobs the casinos are expected to create.

Resistance has been strong to proposals to raze slum areas to make room for casinos, even though ambitious plans call for new, subsidized housing for those who must relocate. The city itself will not receive any revenue from the casinos; the state is to get 8 percent of the gross.

Plainly, the glitter and revitalization, at least at this point, were elsewhere — on the famous Boardwalk at Resorts International.

Beyond the city, beyond the state, a number of interested parties will be watching the Atlantic city experiment intently. Las Vegas, surrounded by desert while Atlantic city is within three hours' drive of 50 million people, has already done some sniping at its new rival. Officials there say New Jersey compromised its strict gambling casino law by agreeing to grant Resorts International a temporary license months before an investigation of the firm was completed.

How long Resorts International will remain the only game in town may soon be determined. Investors, both domestic and foreign, have been holding back, waiting to see if the first casino is successful. Caesars World, the Bally slot machine company, Howard Johnson's, Penthouse and Playboy are expected to build casinos, perhaps in as little as two years.

Also looking on with more than passing interest are officials of New York, Pennsylvania and Florida on behalf of such potentially lucrative gambling arenas as the Catskills, the Poconos and Miami Beach.

For Atlantic City, once one of the world's foremost convention centers and immortalized in song, at the theater and on the Monopoly board, there is now a reason to hope for a return to good times.

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Stan Pontiere Atlantic City's Boardwalk

Connecticut Zoning Dispute Concerns the Quality of Life

Pulling Up the Suburban Drawbridge

By ROBERT E. TOMASSON

STAMFORD, Conn. — In suburban town meetings, where residents in decades past often debated the direction of town expansion and how to broaden the tax base to pay for it, an entirely different issue has become increasingly dominant in the 1970's: How to keep the town from expanding at all.

When schools are debated now, the question is likely to be not how many to build, but which ones to close. In 1965, three of every four public school bond issues were approved at these town meetings, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Now, only about half of the bond issues pass. Last year, for

the first time in the nation's history, the number of students in high school declined.

Such figures underlie a tendency toward "no-growth" policies that have turned many towns into bastions of the middle-class status quo — and increasingly, into targets of zoning-discrimination suits accusing them of keeping out younger, poorer (and darker) people who would like to live there. The mood of resentment was summed up last week at a Westport, Conn., town meeting on apartment zoning. "Our households are getting smaller, our lifestyles are changing," said First Selectman Jacqueline P. Henegge. "Like it or not, we are aging."

The Westport case, which after five years of controversy resulted in the town's making some ac-

commodation for apartment houses, contained many of the emotional elements of zoning debates going on throughout the New York metropolitan area.

"It is an issue of how much can be preserved for whom, and who may be excluded to preserve that quality for others," said Paul Davidoff, executive director of the Suburban Action Institute, a major open-housing group in the region. The institute has prepared a Federally financed report, due for release at the end of this month, that is understood to be strongly critical of zoning practices as a suburban device to maintain exclusionary housing. The report examines what is termed "the systemic zoning pattern of housing discrimination" that effectively excludes all but one class of resident in many areas — the well-to-do — and all but one form of housing — single-family homes on spacious lots.

Unlike the racial policies in the South, where skin color was the sole determinant in many functions of society, the housing practices in northern towns often seem devoted to excluding any element of change, regardless of race, creed or color.

One such practice that the report looks at is the rejection by some towns of Federal funds for sewer projects, a disruptive construction operation that many home-owners with septic tanks strongly oppose. The lack of sewers helps to preserve the pristine quality of life along country roads. It keeps out all except the smallest commercial establishments and apartment buildings.

There have been a number of court rulings on zoning, including a United States Supreme Court decision last year that it is not inherently unconstitutional for a suburb to refuse to alter zoning laws whose practical effect is to block construction of low- and moderate-income housing.

In the tristate area, New Jersey has made the most progress toward opening up housing in the suburbs, Mr. Davidoff said. The New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in 1975 that the zoning code in Mount Laurel Township, which excluded housing for poor- and moderate-income tenants, was a violation of state law. Last year, however, the same court appeared to limit the impact of the ruling to localities not already built up as single-family-home areas.

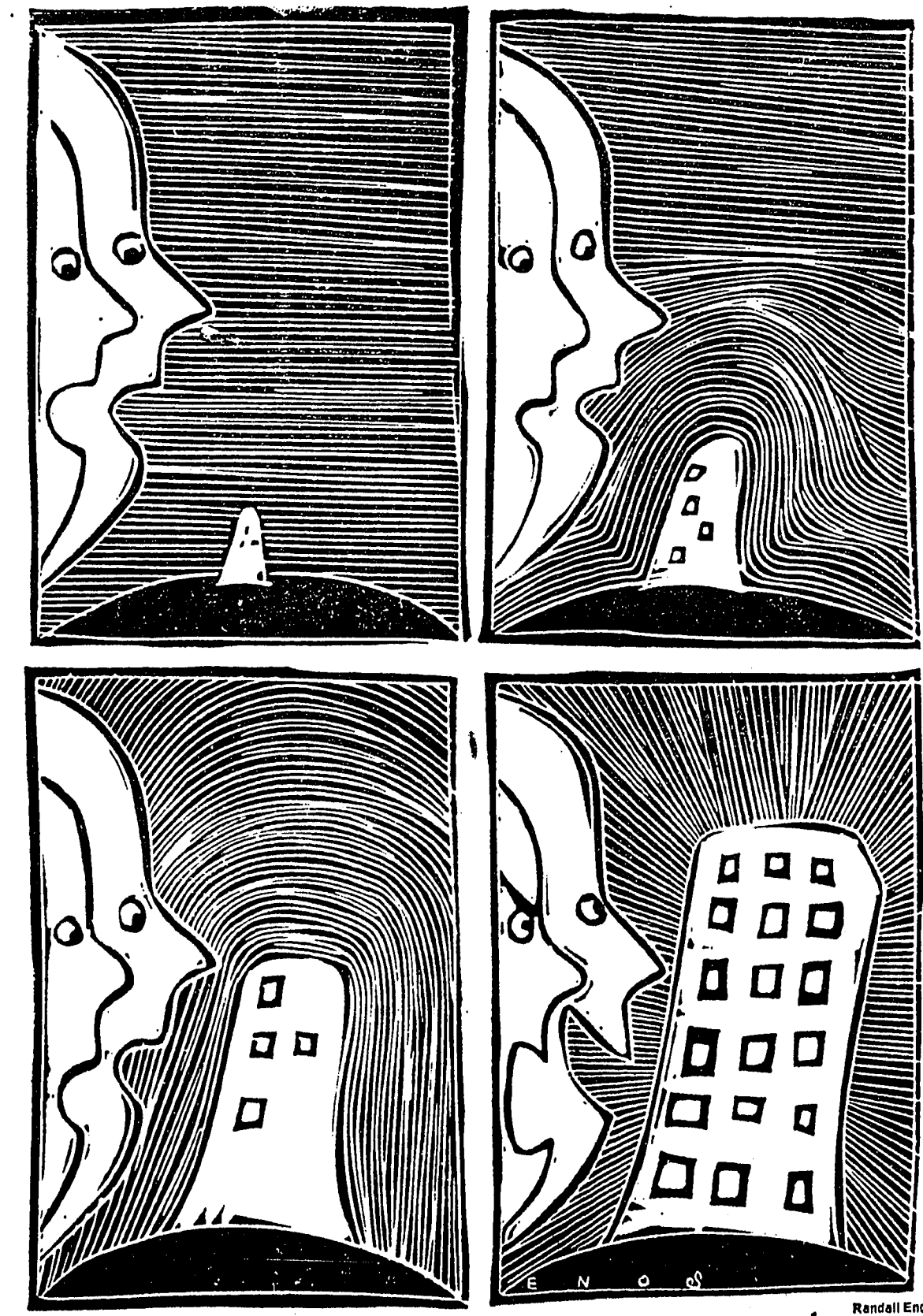
In New York, a case involving the Westchester town of New Castle recently produced a court ruling that the town had to supply multifamily housing if the town had substantially failed to meet the needs for such housing. That decision is being appealed.

Connecticut has been largely unaffected so far by such disputes. However, the upcoming Suburban Action report, commissioned by the state Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities and financed by the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, will look at zoning practices such as those in Greenwich, Conn., where minimum lot sizes of four acres are required in residential areas.

As a practical matter, however, the issues in the prime residential areas close to New York City are being decided less by arguments in court or in town meetings than by the laws of economics. Diminishing availability of land means soaring land costs, which means housing prices that few can afford — even where lots are much smaller than the estate-size minimum that Greenwich requires. Land scarcity, coupled with inflation, is likely to put one-family suburban housing farther out of reach with each passing year for a significant proportion of the population, including many categorized as "middle class."

The zoning debate in Westport the other night had little to do with the needs or aspirations of such people, but much to do with self-preservation. In adopting tight restrictions on the height, number and density of the apartments that will be allowed, Westport in effect adhered to the same principle that governs single-family zoning in many suburban towns: big lots, few people.

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