



Chairman's Introduction

This report was commissioned by the Home Office, but, following changes in departmental responsibilities after the General Election, it is being submitted to the Department of Culture Media and Sport.

The terms of reference are listed in chapter 2.

The last review of gambling regulation was carried out by a Royal Commission under Lord Rothschild. It took two years to produce its report, which was published in 1978. We have tried to survey a rather more complex world of gambling in slightly more than one year. We received over 200 written submissions and, in addition, held more than 20 sessions at which we heard oral evidence. We are most grateful to all those who contributed evidence.

At an early stage of our proceedings I circulated a note which included a paragraph headed "The Chairman's dream." It included the following:

I hope we shall be able to establish principles which are acceptable to all sensible people and shall make proposals consistent with those principles. The (unanimous) Report will then be published (to schedule) to widespread acclaim and all its recommendations will be accepted.

The Report is unanimous and it is being published to schedule. We wait to see how it will be received. It was no doubt naïve to hope that it would be an easy matter to establish widely acceptable principles. It soon became apparent that gambling is an activity where individual values about such matters as the nature of society and the role of the state quickly become paramount. We know where the limits are – complete prohibition or complete deregulation – but there are no widely acceptable principles which tell us where we should stop between the two limits. The dilemmas we faced and our reasons for making the broad choices we did are described in chapter 3.

It is most unlikely that a group of the sort that formed the Gambling Review Body would represent a cross-section of public opinion and it was probably not intended to do so; but we did disagree, often quite vigorously. I believe that this was enormously useful and we hope that the compromises that we have willingly made have helped us produce a report that will be widely acceptable although it is inevitable that we shall be criticised by those who would have liked more deregulation and those who would have preferred further restrictions. I would like to pay a warm tribute to my colleagues on the body who not only had to put in far more time than they might have expected but who also brought their individual skills and personal views to produce such fruitful debates. It was a pleasure to work with them.

We all join in expressing our deepest thanks to the secretariat who supported our work, Geraldine Meneaud-Lissenburg, Jill Parry, Kirsty Wildgoose and Karen Joyce. They not only performed the administrative tasks of organising papers and interviews with great skill and good cheer but were also able to turn our incoherent discussions into logical prose. Most importantly they worked tirelessly on the preparation of the Report. We are extremely grateful to them.

Alan Budd