

21 January 2004

Mr Dennis Turner
House of Commons
London
SW1 0AA

Dear Mr Turner,

RE: The Draft Gambling Bill

I am writing to express my severe dismay at the interpretation by the Department for Culture Media and Sports of the Budd Report on Gambling Review and in particular the subject of prize competitions.

The DCMS, against the recommendations not only of Budd but also authoritative bodies such as The Gaming Board For Great Britain and the Lotteries Council, appear to have tackled regulation of prize competitions by deciding they were not gambling and therefore not liable to be included.

When one considers how lotteries such as ours that are owned and operated by charities are regulated (about which we are not complaining) to the non-regulation of prize competitions, the unfairness screams out, yet the DCMS appear to be hiding behind a fairly bland stance that any meaningful wording that would serve the purpose of regulating prize competitions is too difficult to create.

Some of the outstanding differences in treating us in comparison to prize competitions are as follows:

Society Lotteries

Our lotteries require registration with an appropriate authority

We have to submit returns for each lottery

We are limited on stake money, prizes and expenses

At least 20% of the proceeds must go to the society

Our participants must have reached the age of 16

We cannot sell in a public place or in the street unless from a kiosk

Criminal convictions can apply to even minor lottery offences

Prize competitions

No regulation required

No accountability required

No limits apply

No minimum amount required

No restriction on age applies

No restrictions apply

Most unlikely that any infringement will be treated as criminal offence



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Cynics might argue that because the media is a big player in the prize competition market, their powerful voices are overshadowing the fact that hundreds of millions of pounds are being swallowed up in their competitions at a time when charitable giving is down by a quarter over the past decade as a proportion of our total national income, according to a CAF report.

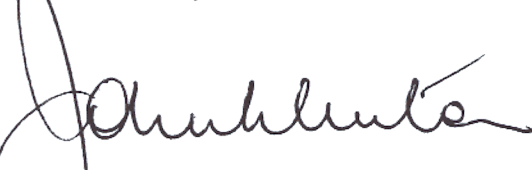
On the issue of stake money, the DCMS indicate that they will permit the increase of ticket price from £1 to £2. This again conflicts with the Budd report which recommended that there be no maximum. From our point of view, a £2 maximum would disallow any special draw where tickets could easily be sold for, say, £5 each.

Finally, the proposal that any subsequent potential change in lottery law should be directed first to the operators of the National Lottery for their consent is simply mind-blowing!

We are only seeking a level playing field as charities compete with commercial enterprises in the lottery market and I would be most grateful if you would kindly pursue this matter in the House on behalf of our three lotteries across the West Midlands, ie the TLC Lottery in Birmingham, the Hospice Lottery in Worcester and the Acorns Gloucester Lottery.

I look forward to hearing from you in due course.

Yours sincerely



JOHN L OVERTON
Chief Executive