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EDITORIAL

Casinos or no casinos, that was the original question about 20 years ago in New Zealand. Now the question is, when will the first casino ever be built. It is amazing how slow bureaucracy can work if it wants to. It is almost as if some bureaucrats had made a bet as to how little can be achieved over a maximum number of years and at what costs to the taxpayer.

Now you may be for or against casinos in New Zealand as the case may be. But since our Government, in its own wisdom, had decided that perhaps a couple of casinos would be a definite asset to

our country, an added source of revenue for its Tax Department and an irresistible lure to overseas tourists, you would think that our politicians would then press ahead with getting these casinos into operation.

But Governments are very peculiar institutions. Whilst new laws can be passed in seven minutes flat when they provide additional personal benefits to our politicians, other matters can languish for years and years before a positive move is made. It is now over a generation ago since the decision was taken about some casinos being allowed in New Zealand. Since then commissions have been appointed, feasibility studies ordered, im-

pact on population reports tabled, assessments on turnover, profit margins and likely taxation revenues established. The number of hours spent on submissions and hearings, by committees, commissions, architects, town planners and city councillors must run into the thousands, most of this at the taxpayer's expense and still not a casino in sight.

Maybe there is some wisdom in this madness. Perhaps, to avoid having to choose one of the contenders for the project and thus antagonising all the others, the Government is hoping by its procrastinations to discourage one contender after another until only one remains. The remaining one may not be the best, but at least the Government could later on not be accused of having chosen the wrong one, since there was only one left anyway. That the Government's strategy works has been illustrated by the fact that some contenders have already pulled out and gone elsewhere where people are more "go ahead" and more businesslike.

The New Zealand casino saga is a typical example on how millions of dollars can be spent on bureaucracy to produce next to nothing.

(If you are a gambler, better stick to LOTTO and Horse Racing).

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AUSTRALASIA was 9560 kHz 245° 0900-1045 UTC, changed to 9885 kHz 245° 0900-1045 UTC

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