*Argument 14*

*The following appeared in a letter to the editor of a local newspaper from a citizen of the state*

*of Impecunia.*

*"Two years ago our neighboring state, Lucria, began a state lottery to supplement tax*

*revenues for education and public health. Today, Lucria spends more per pupil than we do,*

*and Lucria's public health program treats far more people than our state's program does. If we*

*were to establish a state lottery like the one in Lucria, the profits could be used to improve our*

*educational system and public health program. The new lottery would doubtless be successful,*

*because a survey conducted in our capital city concludes that citizens of Impecunia already*

*spend an average of $50 per person per year on gambling."*

In this editorial the author condudes that by establishing a lottery the state of Impecunia

could use the profits from it to improve the state's education and public health programs. To

support this conclusion the author points out that the neighboring state of Lucria established a

lottery two years ago, and that today Lucria spends more per pupil and treats more people

through its health programs than Impecunia does. The editorial also cites a study showing that

the average Impecunia resident now spends $50 per year on gambling. In several respects,

however, the evidence lends little credible support for the argument.

First of all, the fact that Lucria now spends more than Impecunia per pupil, in itself, lends no

support to the argument. Perhaps Lucria has always placed a high priority on education; or

perhaps Lucria has always had more funds than Impecunia to spend on its programs,

including education. Lacking dearer evidence that Lucria's lottery successfully raised revenues

that were then used to increase the amount spent per pupil, the author cannot expect us to

take seriously the claim that by establishing a similar lottery Impecunia would improve its

education programs.

Similarly, the fact that Lucria's health programs treat more people than Impecunia's

programs lends no support to the argument. Perhaps Lucria's population is greater than

Impecunia's; or perhaps its residents are older, on average, than Impecunia's residents, and

therefore require a greater measure of health care. Without considering and ruling out these

and other possible explanations for the distinction cited, the author cannot justifiably conclude

that Lucria's lottery was responsible for improved health care in that state or that a similar

lottery in Impecunia would carry a similar result.

Moreover, the argument unfairly assumes that the lottery in Lucria has been profitable. The

author provides no evidence that this is the case. It is entirely possible that the money used for

education and health care in Lucria comes from sources other than the lottery. Without

accounting for this possibility, the author cannot justify the conclusion that a lottery in

Impecunia would be successful.

Finally, the fact that Impecunia's residents spend $50 per capita on gambling each year

lends little support to the argument. Admittedly, this statistic amounts to some evidence of

interest among Impecunla's residents in gambling, and therefore potential interest in a lottery.

However, this evidence in itself does not suffice to prove that the lottery will in fact be popular.

Perhaps Impecunia residents have no more discretionary income to participate in a lottery

after spending $50 on other forms of gambling. Or perhaps Impecunia residents typically travel

elsewhere to gamble as part of their vacations, and that they would not otherwise be interested

in gambling. In short, without more convincing evidence of both an ability and a willingness on

the part of Impecunia's residents to participate in a lottery the author cannot convince me that

the lottery will be profitable.

In conclusion, the editorial has not convinced me that a lottery would be profitable and would

serve to improve Impecunia's education and health programs. To better evaluate the argument

I would need more information comparing Lucria's level of health care and education

expenditures before and after the lottery was established. To strengthen the argument, the

author must provide dear evidence that Lucria's lottery was profitable and that these profits

contributed to improved education and health care in Lucria. The author must also provide

clearer evidence of the willingness and ability of Impecunia residents to participate broadly in a

lottery.