

## **REJECT LEGALIZATION OF NUMBERS**

It's without a doubt that our greatest tests comes when we are at our weakest point in life. During a time when our nation needs to carefully evaluate our future we are giving ear to the very things brought the world to where it stands now. Without a doubt it was Greed that created this global recession. Even now as the great nations of the world embrace protectionism as a vehicle to drive themselves out of this problem we seek to embrace gambling as our form of transport. In both cases only the poor will suffer.

### **Religion and Politics**

This is not an issue that calls for the injection of religious bodies or the clergy. Those who say that they carry the Spirit of Christ within them should know better. Even a carnal man whose conscience isn't sensitive to the Spirit of God can clearly see the wrong in this. Because The Bible does not say it's wrong does not make it right. The no-mention of it should be viewed as a no-brainer. If your Boss had to write out every detail of an assignment in order for you to work properly then you don't deserve your position.

As much decisions as the Prime Minister have made without religious counsel makes one wonder why Mr. Ingraham would choose to even address the legalization of gambling with the Christian Council? I am not misguided to believe that this is solely a moral issue. Yet the very presence of the Counsel would lead many to believe it is and if they say yes then God is OK with it.

How much is there to gain from all of this? \$30 million is a tempting loaf of bread out here in the wilderness. Why don't we just eat and be filled?

I'm not a preacher, nor am I perfect. But I understand fully that it's a greater wrong that if I myself seek to have another validate a sin that I myself have fallen victim to. Misery loves company. There is a deception that if the world makes it right then we all will feel better about doing it. This is not so.

### **Pastime Paradise**

Today we are beginning to see the effects of crime on our country. It has become a wonder to many how things got this bad. There is no denying that everything comes into existence on the basis of cause and effect. Crime did not just happen. We have allowed many things to multiply and thrive thus the end result is what we are now witnessing—a nation that is in chaos. We are living in a Pastime Paradise where ignorance and complacency the order of the day. We pay attention to the issues and ignore the causes.

As we count the number of murders and as we look in awe at the level of brutality being carried out, one may ask: "Can it get any worse than this?" A good answer would be yes.

We have allowed ourselves to fall far into conditions that were previously foreign to us. Never in our history have we seen such crime numbers as those last year. It would be a shame for us to overlook this tragedy and say to ourselves that this is a new year and let's begin counting again. My question to this Government is this: What is one life worth? My questions to my people are these: What is your life worth? What does peace and security mean to you? Do you feel safe in your homes? Are your children safe? Are you willing to sacrifice your freedom and liberties to bring this nation back in order?

By no means will we survive if we are not willing to sacrifice our own desires for the sake of our nation.

There are many factors that contribute to crime. Drug and alcohol abuse are some of the greatest factors which have led to the destruction of our communities. This is no secret and many would agree to this fact that these two elements have and continue to destroy many lives (especially those of young people).

I believe, however, that our greatest threat is commonly unseen elements that secretly invade communities under the guise of entertainment. They promise wealth and prosperity but never mention the cost. They prey on the weak and the strong, the rich and the poor, the good and the bad. This growing threat to the stability of this nation boldly sits on every street corner, free and open to serve without any form of authoritative opposition.

Let's not be fooled - There are no winners in this so-called gaming industry.

There is a misconception that monies collected from gambling organizations can be used to improve communities, contribute to youth programs and sponsor various educational and charitable ventures. Again I say let's not be fooled. By no means will we ever benefit from gambling. The means will never justify the end. The true beneficiaries of this vicious cycle only seek to profit and preserve themselves at the expense of us all. We will all pay for this.

How can young people benefit from lottery sponsorship when studies show that children of compulsive gamblers are prone to suffer abuse and neglect? Studies have also shown that these same children are high risk for drug and alcohol addiction.

In the United States alone it is said that 25-50 percent of spouses of chronic gamblers have been abused. It is no secret that domestic violence and child abuse are at an all time

high in The Bahamas. These places are filled in the evenings by parents who haven't reached home from work to attend to their children. Yet our Minister of National Security was able to identify that parents are spending too much time in Church.

It would be hypocritical for us to believe that we will benefit in any way from gambling when the cost is far greater than what can ever be given. The citizens of this country pay millions in taxes every year. A large majority of our tax dollar go towards ever increasing demands in departments such as Social Services, Health care and Education.

An interesting study on the economical effects of gambling was conducted by Professor John W. Kindt of the University of Illinois. The results of the study showed that for every \$1 gained from gambling, taxpayers in tern paid a total of \$3 in social and economic cost. The awareness of the insanity in paying for our own social decay should be sufficient to remove ourselves from this plague.

There is much debate and reasoning as to what is and what is not gambling. I will not address them all but here is my plea to The Bahamian people. My view is not that of a religious one but of common sense and love for each other.

If a man is weak have compassion and do not contribute to his weakness.

Do not think because you are strong that others are in the same condition. Because one man is able to control himself doesn't mean that another has the same talent. What may be a game to you may be life and death to another. What may be your pocket change may be another's last.

When you play a number remember that you are contributing to a child going hungry. When you play a number think about the families that are being destroyed by gambling addiction. It has been said over and over again that The Family is the most important institution in the world. If we lose the family we lose everything. Crime and everything else we face today begins at home. The laws we need are those that protect the family structure, not destroy it!

How much is it worth to you that you would sow these seeds into your life?

**Conclusion**

I ask that the Christian Counsel not to entertain the Government in this matter. If Mr. Ingraham seeks to move this measure into place then let him do this on his own. I see no future for gambling in the Bahamas. Even if this was to come to past it wont last long. And if God is testing us in this time of famine let us prove the devil wrong.

*Delroy Meadows*

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