

This letter is in response to the very well written article, published by the Compass and written by John Flatley on Thursday, July 22nd. The writer based his reflections on comments made by *"at least one popular talk show host"* on the issue or more correctly, the definition of gambling and came to the conclusion that there are those exclusive groups who are fit and proper to engage in gambling, on the basis that their true objective is *"wholesome and of the benefit to others"* and *"to improve the Church's youth programme"*.

Before we begin, let us simply acknowledge and confirm a few things. Firstly, although the writer did not refer to *"Cayman Crosstalk"* or its hosts' by name, we think it is fair to assume he was talking to us. Not only has this conversation originated from our program, with regular commentary & debate had on it, but also a Petition written, organized, distributed and delivered to the Government by co-host Mr. Gilbert McLean, leads us to conclude the writer was making reference to our programme and its hosts.

Although we are a little disappointed that Mr. Flatley did not feel comfortable offering up his counter viewpoint directly to the media in which the discussion has largely been based, we believe that all of our discussions on *"Cayman Crosstalk"*, are the property of the people we serve, namely the citizens of the Cayman Islands. As such, we are delighted that important discussions are now taking place island-wide, with people talking to each other and talking out. That is a good thing, and has always been our ultimate objective.

Secondly, so that the Petition itself, presented to the Government for consideration, not be perverted or taken out of context, which in some cases it already has, we provide the following statement on the Intent of the Petition and its' Question. It states as follows: -

Be it resolved that we the undersigned Voters of the Cayman Islands request that Government hold a Referendum at the earliest possible time to determine whether the public would accept the introduction of a National Lottery on a "Yes" or "No" question.

Be it further resolved that if the majority of the voters voting in the Referendum should vote "Yes", the Government would forthwith take steps to establish a National Lottery in the Cayman Islands, using the Florida Lottery as a model including the other daily variations of gaming conducted by this entity in its jurisdiction.

Thirdly, we say to the Church that this discussion in no way seeks to unfairly criticize the valuable and absolutely necessary work that as an institution, it provides. Instead only to promote intelligent debate on important issues, without fear or reluctance to challenge, at times, even the Church.

Mr. Flatley suggests in his article that a Raffle, hosted by a church is OK because the Gambler is not buying it with the expectation or hope of reward, but instead his intent is supporting the greater good. While in some cases that may be true, it's semantics in our opinion. The question could be asked if the motivation is to contribute to worthy causes through raffles, why then offer prizes as a reward? Gambling is Gambling and whether the intention is the greater good or personal gain, by definition, it is one and the same. It is also equally as important to further understand the proper context of the conversation, rather than zero in on one particular issue and thereby pervert the message.

The Petition to Government and largely the support of it is based on the understanding that the proceeds of this "Game of Chance" be used to fund Education, Health-Care and its own Operating Costs. A Lottery is proposed as an alternative to the illegal, yet regularly practiced, **Numbers Game** in Cayman, which only benefits a select few, with massive profits going offshore. The Petition does not seek to promote Casino style Gambling, which like the current **Numbers game**, largely only benefits those select few, while offering mere crumbs in return by way of community funding, only to the extent of promoting its own greed and furtherance of its primary business; unless Government

takes steps to tax a percentage of the profits. The general acceptance of the "Numbers Game" and the selective concepts of "good" and "not a sin" gambling, is why over the years, there have been exceptionally few arrests.

We therefore suggest to Mr. Flately, that by his own definition, a National Lottery would, if introduced as it has been suggested, be "*wholesome and of the benefit to others*". As such, is it then not the exact same thing as the Raffle's put up by our Churches? If he agrees, then why should we bother putting in Legislation for it, why not just simply do it? The Churches/Service Clubs get away with it because it serves the "Greater Good", while others "*lose so that some can win*". Why not simply do the same with the Lottery? The Answer is, they are one and the same, however, like many laws in the Cayman Islands, they apply differently to certain people or groups. But if we are going to engage on a discussion on "What is Gambling", let's call it like it is and not make excuses why one kind is better than the next.

The basis of our debate on Gambling in the Cayman Islands is, two-fold; on the one hand it is about how the law against gambling is often interpreted and enforced, creating the perception that there are different rules for different people and on the other, to define what our society deems acceptable forms of Gambling, and those that are deemed unacceptable.

Austin Harris & Gilbert McLean

Cayman Crosstalk