

## **Casino gambling would provide billions for education**

*Petrina Francis, Education Reporter, Jamaica Gleaner, Thursday | December 16, 2004*

DR. RALPH Thompson, a member of the National Council on Education, said yesterday that the introduction of casino gambling would be the answer to funding the \$52 billion per year needed to transform the education system over the next ten years.

"The Government should stop pussyfooting around and introduce casino gambling," Dr. Thompson said. "Its take of the revenue from casinos could be split 50/50 between tourism and education." He was speaking at the Rotary Club of downtown Kingston weekly luncheon at the Hilton Hotel, New Kingston.

Dr. Thompson argued that the benefits from casino gambling would outweigh any perceived drawbacks, saying the Govern-ment had an obligation to exhibit leadership in putting it in place regardless of whatever political fallout it may cause.

### DECISION

The prominent educator said he was flabbergasted as to why such a logical decision had not yet been made, adding that it was better to gamble on casinos rather than to gamble on the future education of children.

Dr. Thompson said he would also like to revive a suggestion made by Monsignor Richard Albert some time ago, that (more of) the revenue from the lottery companies should go to education rather than to sports. "Play has its place but education is the key," he stressed.

Dr. Thompson is the latest figures in a long list of prominent figures who have been clamouring for the introduction of casinos. Following on the heels of Tourism Minister Aloun Assamba's impassioned plea, the Jamaica Hotel and Tourist Association (JHTA) and also the Private Sector Organisation of Jamaica (PSOJ) have come out in support of giving the green light to casinos.

The Government, however, very much aware of the staunch opposition from church leaders and religious groups, has been careful not to say much as to whether it was contemplating bringing in the casinos.

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