

Enill: No casino workers to go

Minister in the Ministry of Finance Conrad Enill said Government has no plans to shut down the local gaming industry and throw its estimated 7,000 workers on the breadline. However Enill's assurances have not satisfied the Union of Members and Club Workers Lottery (UMCLW) and Association of Members Clubs (AMC).

UMCLW executive member Stephaun Stanislaus yesterday said the union wants to discuss the matter with Prime Minister Patrick Manning while AMC president Bryan Phillip described Enill's statement as another "false promise" from the Government.

Prior to the passage of the 2007/2008 Budget in the Senate on Thursday night, Enill said Government maintains that private members clubs are legal but casino gambling is illegal.

Recalling Manning's statements on this issue in last year's Budget, Enill said industry stakeholders have informed Government about job losses which will happen if the industry is closed.

"Government indicated that no such activity will take place until there was consultation with the industry. The Government does not have now, did not have then and will not have in the future any intention of putting any of our citizens out of any productive economic activity," Enill declared.

The minister added that changes to the industry would take place only after discussions have been completed with the stakeholders and arrangement are put in place to ensure "they will be well taken care of."

Stanislaus told Newsday that the UMCLW understands Government's position on the matter and all it wants to know is what

plan is being developed to re-train gaming workers if this is Government's intention.

He said all of the meetings with Enill prior to the Budget's presentation in Parliament on August 20 have yielded little information and the union is calling for a meeting with the Prime Minister to settle the issue once and for all.

Stanislaus said he attended the special PNM convention in Bon Air last Saturday and was told by a government official that the industry might have about three months left.