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Small Axe, Big Tree Merlene takes on DFC

It's was certainly a Mad Hatter's Tea Party but, as 'Alice' Merlene Bailey Martinez maintained a calm Alice-like authority over the ongoing DFC Commission of Inquiry, which recommenced on February 1st. Although many had expected a much subdued performance from the chair, following the unfortunate death of David Price, it was anything but that.

Merlene Matinez Bailey was hard and unremitting in her questioning and persisted for answers in a polite but severe and uncompromising manner. She relentlessly pursued the Mahogany Heights, Los Lagos, Novelo's Bus and other DFC fiascos in search of responsibility for the huge sums of money which went missing - millions and millions of the people's money shuffled like monopoly cards between projects, banks and offshore businesses.

The tone of the meeting was set on Thursday by Mark Hulse, the forensic auditor: "Our review of the Novelo loan indicated many breaches of procedure, protocol, and fiduciary duty. It also indicated conflicts of interest in respect to which Mr. Godfrey, the chairman of the D.F.C. appears to have been a beneficiary through his legal practice and a bank under his control.

"In our view," he continued, "this consti-

tuted a related party transaction which should have been, but was not, disclosed in the audited financial statements. Further examples of delinquent loans where procedures were breached and conflicts of interest were ignored.

"Examples include New Millennium Enterprises Limited, Aqua Marine Suites Limited, Print Belize Limited, Royal Palm Limited, Karim Adle, Toledo Free Zone, and those are just a few examples. Most loan files were incomplete and or procedures were not adhered to. By thirty-first December 2004, the total book value of non-performing loans had increased to some Belize one hundred and twenty million dollars."

The star witnesses at the hearings on Thursday and Friday, Jorge Omar Espejo, David Courtenay, Hugh McSweeney et al., were like the Mad Hatter's guests; wondering, forgetful, deceptive - and only finally and very occasionally—throwing any real light on what actually took place.

Overshadowing all, throughout the hearings, was the huge shadow of Finance Supremo Ralph Fonseca. And, his name did finally emerge! Yes, David Courtenay acknowledged who had responsibility for the Mahogany Heights housing disaster: "the Finance Minister, Mr Fonseca."

Of course, reference to Glenn Godfrey's extraordinary financial dealing, through a host of companies, and banks, even had 'Alice' at times seeming puzzled and perplexed. But, his turn is still to come and, she always brought her witnesses back to their role in events.

What the hearing revealed, above all else, was the degree to which the DFC was totally an arm and extension of government. It had no autonomy. It's daily and weekly policy, everything in fact the DFC did, was dictated on high by and from—as the hearings indicate—Ralph Fonseca.

And Channel 7 takes up the story: "While Mr. Courtenay did not accept that there had been any wrongdoing at the DFC, this afternoon, former Financial Secretary Hugh McSweeney said that something had gone very wrong with the corporation. He couldn't say who caused it, or what was his role, but in his words, "it was awful." But according to the Commissioners, what was awful to them was how as Financial Secretary he did not know that Government was paying Abdul Hamze \$9 million for a property—Mahogany Heights to be specific - for which it had no title. McSweeney was deputy Financial Secretary and Financial Secretary at key points in the transaction, but says he was not aware that this \$9 million transaction was riddled

with problems - he says maybe legal counsel Gian Ghandi knew, but he didn't.

Hugh McSweeney: "The government of Belize 's problem was a cash problem. As far as I am concerned we couldn't do anything to stop the DFC train."

Merlene Bailey-Martinez, "You couldn't?"

Hugh McSweeney, "Even though we tried."

Merlene Bailey-Martinez, "In what way did you try?"

Herbert Lord, "You're saying it was a runaway train?"

Merlene Bailey-Martinez, "Could you let him answer?"

Hugh McSweeney, "Well I would not mention that and I don't want you to put words in my mouth."

McSweeney also discussed the time when government incurred a \$9 million pre-payment penalty on one of its loans. It's one of the worse financial transactions government

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Citrus Growers vote out 6 directors

Following heated controversy surrounding the sale of shares in Citrus Products of Belize Limited to a Caribbean firm, the majority of the 550 growers belonging to the Belize Citrus Growers Association (CGA) took an unprecedented move on Saturday expelling six of nine directors in a vote of no confidence and replaced them with new members of the "Committee of Management"/Board of Directors.

The outgoing members are: Ernest Raymond (Chair), William Bowman OBE (Vice Chair), Richard Polack, Patrick Scott, Simon Willacey, and Steve Downard.

The incoming members are: Ricardo Escalente, Victor Quan, Gilbert Waight, Francisco Bull, David



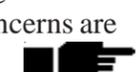
CPBL director Denzil Jenkins

Hayles and Former Belmopan Mayor Anthony Chanona.

The unaffected directors are: Frank Redmond, Steve St. Cyr, and Denzil Jenkins.

Mr. Jenkins told Independent Weekly that he has no response to the full page advertisement taken out by members of the outgoing board accusing him of "waging war" on the citrus industry by questioning the wisdom of the sale of shares to the Caribbean firm, know by various names including "Blue Waters" and "Banks."

He said, "That response was given by the growers at the SGA on Saturday with 86% majority voting to remove those directors who signed on supported finalizing the agreement."

Jenkins says among concerns are (Please Turn To Page 6) 

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The death of a friend

We got some shocking news this week, one of our contributors had been murdered. Richard Hulse, a friend from my Channel Five days, had called after the very first issue at the end of November to say he'd like to write for us. It was not a matter of money he said, just an opportunity to write something more than just daily court updates and "let the people know what kinda court system they have, what works, and what doesn't, because this thing affects a lotta people Karla, lotta people. Mostly little people who don't stand a chance of getting off like the big fish dem."

A few days later he sent me what I consider one of the best, most impartial analysis of our judicial system and the difficulties of getting witnesses to testify or even be located. (See "Crime and Belizean Society," Independent Weekly, December 12, 2006)

You see, if anyone would know the court system it was Richard, for he had been sitting in on cases in the Belize City Magistrate and Supreme Court for decades.

He kept copious notes and extensive files. You could give him any name and he'd run home and come back with that person's entire history with the courts, and the police. To say he had the stats on a lot of dangerous people would be an understatement.

After his article on the court system, he did another one for us called ("The Culture of Exclusion—A View from the Streets," January 12, 2007) on the art scene



Richard Hulse at the opening of the Supreme Court, January 2005

in Belize and how he did not believe it catered to the ordinary man and woman. He later told me he felt he did not put enough time into it, that it could have been better. That he would do a much, much better one next time. When I saw him Tuesday, he told me "I'm working on another one for you right now."

I will never see it, you will never read it. Perhaps it is even now lying there, soaked with his own blood, part of the evidence at the crime scene. We can but wonder what topic he had chosen, and if he would feel he had done it justice.

Will there be justice for Richard Hulse? At this writing, the police do not know who killed him.. There are rumors about his personal life and speculation about the company he

kept. It may have been a crime of passion, a robbery, or he might have crossed paths with someone who did not want his entire history known, or reported on in the media. We will have to wait and see if there is an arrest, and a conviction, or if his case remains unsolved, or worse, dismissed due to lack of evidence.

I am sure Richard never expected that someone would one day climb the steps of Channel Five and then down again into the newsroom, the same way he did several times a week, to report on HIS death, HIS murder trial. That people who enjoyed his jovial personality--even if we had to cut him short to finish the newscast in time--would have to report and write and read about his brutal end on air, and try not to cry.

Or that he'd have to part company so soon with another friend who started her own paper and welcomed his observations on the system he knew so well and the "high society" he never felt would accept him. That she would have to say goodbye this week, instead of running the article he was working on when he died.

Bye Rich, from me and Trevor.

And thanks from the people of Belize for following up each week on all the convictions, acquittals, and appeals long after the incidents first made the headlines. For letting us know who cussed up the judges or took a swipe at the cameraman, or just sat there and trembled.

And thanks for all the stories behind the stories. Some of them might just come in handy some day....

The INdependent Reformer

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Please Call Me Back



By: Trevor Vernon

We are new in this newspaper business where maintaining contact with advertisers, columnists, writers, and our sources is key to survival. We are on the road and on the phone a lot, oftentimes simultaneously. As a start-up we must keep in touch with the people, as many as we can... all the time. And since we are such a small outfit, we must do everything ourselves. So we must have and maintain a personal touch with every aspect of the business.

The costs affiliated with doing business in Belize today are astronomical in large part due to excessive taxes, government fees, legal fees, energy costs, and communication services.

Gasoline pump prices are outrageous thanks to Government formulated tax structures. Three times the acquisition cost is what we pay at the pump. The other major recurring costs are tele-

communications and printing costs. The latter we can not control much even though GST Unit is strongly discouraging us from registering.

We pay about a grand a month to that unit on printing costs alone yet we should not register? The lady at the Unit tells me she can't register the company "just so you can buy furniture and office equipment." Why on earth would I buy office equipment in Belize at robber baron prices? All our equipment is ordered direct from US Online stores. Pay the huge mark-ups? What for?

"It makes for difficult communication especially when everyone is using the expensive cell phone service."

Thank God for the internet and online vendors or we wouldn't be in business. I am just as patriotic as the next guy but we have to keep our eye on the bottom line.

We are even now hearing complaints from the business community that refunds are not forthcoming from GST. We can't confirm this but it comes from pretty credible sources. They tell us that GST Unit claims to have been having

software issues with THE Canadian Software Supplier. So, no refund checks available. At least not at this writing.

The cost that most businesses can best control is the telephone usage. So we get a lot of "call me right back" requests from a lot of folks. Can't blame them, really. But it makes for difficult communication especially when everyone is using the expensive cell phone service. Dollar a minute adds up real fast, especially for a new start-up.

Now just imagine if those calls were \$.10 a minute instead...if gasoline was

BZ\$4.00 a gallon (like it is in the US right now). Just imagine if your business electricity bill was \$40 instead of \$240, and you could commute from Ladyville to Belize City without having to buy a new tire every week as many of us are doing right now.

Imagine if the climate in Belize was business friendly, instead of business hostile. If local investors were treated with the same love as select foreigners. Imagine if the tax office told you your business could get a tax WRITE OFF or Tax CREDIT for buying locally manufactured furniture or locally configured computer equipment.

Imagine if you could buy a case of beer or frequent a local tavern/hotel for a little happy hour with your employees at the end of a productive work week instead of them jumping the border to go drink at a bar in another country because it is cheaper...and comes with free "Boca".

Imagine if raising the minimum wage really did make it easier for Belizean workers to absorb cost-of-living increases, if a 10% discount at a shop actually lowered the price of the goods you purchased instead of just covering the sales tax.

Imagine a Ministry of Local Business, a Department of Entrepreneurial Affairs, a small business bank and workers compensation (which could not be pillaged by the narco-laundering multi-millionaires).

Imagine a country where young graduates felt they could actually plan to stay home after graduation and people who had emigrated could come home without spending their entire retirement savings on groceries, utilities, gas and rent.

Just imagine a country where the government is not milking the business community but nurturing their success by providing a non-hostile environment.

Now the political party that would set out to accomplish something like that...they'd get my vote and support in a heartbeat. And I'd even pay for the call and not ask them to "please call me right back."

Oil - Boon or Bane Pt II

Here is part two of an interview with oil consultant Jim Cavannaugh.

IW. It seems Belize oil is a problem with three players: GOB, BNE and the Mennonites.

JC. "Actually I see it more as a four sided problem: government, oil company, landowner and the Belizean people. The government and BNE will be common with each discovery, but the landowners can change. The Belizean people, the ones that really count, always seem to be left out of the equations. The landowners and the Belizean people can be grouped as "victims." The number one consideration should always be how the situation will benefit the Belizean people, but because they are not an organized unit, they are not even considered."

IW. The Mennonites are not really victims though, as they do get some of the royalties from the oil, don't they?

JC. "Forget the Mennonites, and

just look at them as landowners. I have owned and operated my own oil company, so let me take you through oil field economics. When my studies say a particular site looks good, I approach the individual land/mineral owners and lease their mineral rights, with the industry standard deal where all the risk is mine. I pay for any and all damages, and if I find oil, the owner of the land on which the well was drilled will received 1/8th of the oil proceeds (12.5% royalty). I will usually have a lot of money invested in geology and seismic so I don't want to make a discovery and have someone come in and drill next to me taking advantage of my exploration investment. Thus if it looks like I have a 1000 acre prospect, I will probably lease 5000 to 10,000 acres to protect the prospect from encroachment.

Some people sell their land and keep the mineral rights, so there are land (Please Turn To Page 6) 

Citrus Growers vote out 6...

 (Continued From Page 1)

the fact that the company, registered in St. Lucia, is an offshore vehicle created especially for this transaction, and there is no public listing of who the directors or shareholders are and no information about their identities has been forthcoming. Since seeing a copy of the agreement some months ago he has maintained it's a bad deal for Belizean growers.

Apparently they agree.

Notices had been sent to members announcing there would be two meetings February 03, 2007 at CGA Compound, Mile 9, Stann Creek Valley Road at 9AM and 2PM, respectively. One was an Annual General Meeting (AGM); and the other, a Special General Meeting (SGM). AGMs are legally required; SGMs are at the request of the membership.

However, reports to INdependent Weekly are that the AGM was postponed, but not for the inability to get a quorum. Growers weren't interested in the agenda items of the AGM apparently. Growers wanted to effect

leadership change in the direction of the Industry. And did they ever.

While we unable to confirm the exact numbers in attendance Saturday, we were informed that there was a quorum and that some 71% of the attendees voted by secret ballot to remove the majority of the directors of the CGA.

The Agenda of the SGA was not fully explored as time was not on the side of the meeting given the hostilities of the day. So the issue of the review of the sale of 46.59% share in CPBL and the recovery of the CGA shares sold for US\$2 was never fully aired. No decisions were taken.

The new Management Committee is expected to hold meetings to elect its new officers within hours of this publication hitting the streets.

What will be the decisions of the new board? Will they uphold the sale? Will they shake up the industry? Will GOB meddle in this affair too? More questions than answers but we find the heated exchanges to be an asset to this country's search for its lost soul.

Yo ho, yo ho..a pirate's life for me



By: Karla Heusner Vernon

You can almost see a white lace cuff encircling the bejeweled hand they wave around, brushing aside all attempts to besmirch their character. Dare I say they raise a scented handkerchief to their noses so they do not have to smell the foul odors of the unwashed masses seated in the auditorium?

Ah, but your Graces, you are mistaken, it is not the peasants who reek, but yourselves.

How smug and superior and self-righteously they attempt to deflect the blame for the damage they have done to the national economy and the society.

They tell the investigators at the So-

cial Security Board and Development Finance Corporation hearings: "Alas, I was out of the country," "I did not attend that meeting," "This is the first time I am seeing this document," "The specifics I do not recall," "The chairman approved it," "The Minister approved it..."

They patronize their inquisitors, look down their long crooked noses, "I

two minors walking on a southern road and send them to the hospital, so the Huns of former British Honduras are drunk on their own power.

Why should they not toast their own success? Is there any real possibility anyone will be end up in the gaol? Here or anywhere else? Will their booty be seized? Will their lifestyle be changed in any way shape or form?

who stretches his legs or arms in private after removing the fake hook or peg leg, laughing as he raises his vest pocket flask to wet his lips during the recess. Smiling at the thought of the damaging information he is withholding until the very last moment in case he is betrayed?

Yes, it is excellent entertainment; such a lovely sword fight....

The crowd secretly cheers them one, admiring their financial acumen, their swashbuckling spirit. Their ability to amass money, move millions in and out of various accounts, and make it disappear again, while they themselves can hardly pay their mortgage. Who would not want to be one of the wheelers and dealers? To be given the chance to get a little cut, a little commission, even 2 or 3% of all that lovely money...To have so much cash stashed in offshore accounts they could leave the country on the next plane and never look back. Instead of having to sneak in "tru di back."

You never know when they might need to flee the Mosquito coast. Not

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Who would not want to be one of the wheelers and dealers? To be given the chance to get a little cut, a little commission, even 2 or 3% of all that lovely money...

wish I could be helpful, but it was so long ago..."

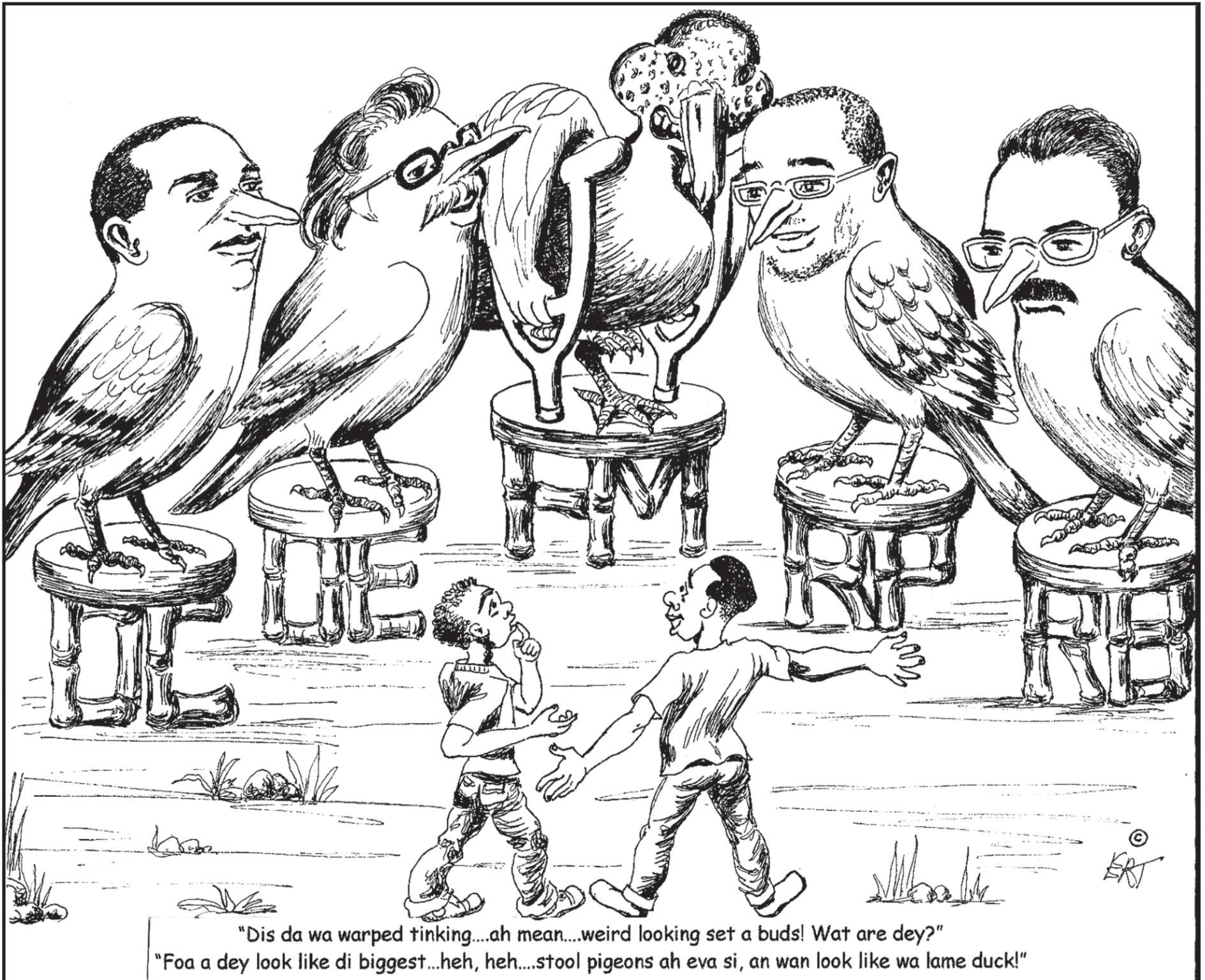
But, just like their privateer predecessors, there is no honor among thieves. Smoothly, suavely, they attempt to sell each other down river. Or pretend they are just above the whole sordid mess.

Just as minor minister Mes attempted to pretend he did not run over

Would any of these first Belizeans, ever be required to live like the second and third Belizeans?

I marvel at those who stay glued to the radio. Who breathe, "Oooh, dey gat dem now!" each time some new revelation is revealed...

Who has got who? What deals have been cut on the side, whose eye is sparkling behind the fake eye patch,



"Dis da wa warped tinkin....ah mean....weird looking set a buds! Wat are dey?"
 "Foa a dey look like di biggest...heh, heh....stool pigeons ah eva si, an wan look like wa lame duck!"

Should Belizeans who reside abroad have the right to vote?

By: Mario Lara

The constitution of Belize requires 2 months residency in Belize for a citizen to be able to register to vote. And, the rules of voting by proxy do not generally apply to Belizeans residing abroad. There is no provision in the constitution for voting by absentee ballot. Thus, the constitution of Belize strips away the right to vote from thousands of Belizeans who reside abroad.

According to information available at the US Department of State website, the number of Belizeans living in the United States is estimated at 70,000. That estimate is probably on the low side. In addition, there is a significant number of Belizeans living in other parts of the world.

Many people who have been asked the question of whether Belizeans should have the right to vote respond quickly and in no uncertain terms, "NO!"

Some argue that Belizeans abroad shouldn't vote because they would not have to live with the consequences of their vote. Others argue that if they loved their country and wanted to vote, they should not have left. If you are someone who thinks along these lines, please consider the following:

Many Belizeans who have left home have done so precisely as a consequence of the political and economic situation in Belize. They leave in search of a better way of life. But, they do not forget their families and their homeland that they leave behind. In a report dated April, 2006 by Dovelyn Aguias of the Migration Policy Institute, on the basis of data from the Inter-American Development Bank/Multilateral Investment Fund, Belizeans living abroad were responsible for \$77 million US in remittances to Belize in the year 2004 - representing 7% of GDP. This is a tangible measure of the care that Belizeans abroad have for those at home and significant investment that they make toward improving the future of Belize. Monies sent by those Belizeans abroad help to send students to school, put food on tables, create jobs, and reduce poverty at home. Furthermore, Belizeans abroad who invest in Belize pay taxes on their investments.

Some argue that with so many Belizeans abroad, they would have

the power to influence the results of elections. This is true. But then, influencing the outcome of elections is the whole point of voting, isn't it?

globalization, and deep pocket foreign investors wield significant influence over local leaders and threaten, in a real way, the exist-

a way to permit absentee ballot voting by Belizeans abroad and safeguarding against corruption, admittedly, would take some extremely careful thought and planning. But, many models exist around the world and it is not an insurmountable obstacle. Strengthening our laws to be able to penalize those who would perpetrate fraud upon the citizens by tampering with any part of the voting system, including trucking in illegal aliens to vote, can be examined along the way.

Granted, most people do not get too excited about voting even when they have the right to do so. This is yet another good reason why that right should not be taken away from so many. We need more Belizeans to participate - not less!

If this article has convinced you in any way that it is important that Belizeans abroad have the right to vote, take action and spread the message. Talk to your area representatives and local leaders. Let this issue be placed on the manifesto of the next party that wins a majority so that a referendum can be put to the voters at home. Let the voters at home decide if their families abroad should be given back their right to vote and let us start working on finding a mechanism that we can trust to work in the most tamper-proof way possible. Let us not be defeated by dishonesty and corruption.

Email your thoughts to the author at cowfootsoup@yahoo.com

Blue notes, block parties, silly political slogans, and special favors around elections time would not be effective strategies towards winning the vote of Belizeans residing abroad.

It is unlikely that the tally of votes from Belizeans living abroad would ever overturn the will of the majority back home. It is difficult to imagine how dire the political and economic situation back home would have to be for this to occur. But, the significant numbers of Belizeans abroad, if they had the right to vote, can certainly give third party candidates and independent candidates a better chance at gaining a seat in government; and this could strengthen the role of the opposition and elevate the caliber of candidates and quality of political debate and campaigns. Blue notes, block parties, silly political slogans, and special favors around elections time would not be effective strategies towards winning the vote of Belizeans residing abroad.

The concept of the nation state is being challenged from many angles. Large multi-national corporations,

ence of young micro nation states such as Belize. Disenfranchising a large number of a tiny nation's born citizens by stripping them of their right to vote simply because they choose to move about this world we live in, seems to me to be one more way to weaken the concept of the nation state.

The most convincing argument that I have heard regarding why Belizeans abroad should not be given back the right to vote is that it would be too difficult to implement and corrupt politicians would run amuck with any absentee voting system. It is ironic that the best argument against increasing citizen participation to help them become watchdogs against corruption and to improve the quality of government is the fact that we already have a poor quality of government and cannot trust our politicians to respect the system. Implementing

Nature's Way Guesthouse
In Punta Gorda

Welcome To Nature's Way Guesthouse
Clean, Safe, Affordable,
Central Location Sea Front View & Breeze
Single \$23BZD, Double \$33BZD,
Triple \$48BZD
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Main & Church Streets, walk down
hill 75 yards to Guesthouse.

More Debate with Sir Ronald Sanders on CARICOM

by Ray Auxillou

Following the article of last week in the Independent newspaper with a rebuttal of Sir Ronald Saunders, please allow me the right of response. The essence of my own article's thrust was that without internal transportation links by sea and air, CARICOM cannot become a nation of its own right. Again, watching the squabble of richer CARICOM country leaders over air traffic routes and the losses they are willing to take from scarce tax revenues paid out of their own citizen pockets, does not lend much belief that these people can manage a nation of scattered countries, when they cannot settle such a mundane necessary internal transportation issue. A couple of Sander's other points! I agree the political and international "one voice" approach of limited cooperation does have a lot to offer all small countries in CARICOM, particularly in bananas and sugar through the WTO. That does not make a CARICOM nation though. An As-

sociation? Maybe.

I laughed and laughed over the comment saying Belize was the ONLY country with a positive trade balance with CARICOM! What Sir Ronald Sanders neglected to say, was that my friend Frank Redmond, a 500 acre farmer and some of his farmer friends, shipped a small amount of their red kidney beans crop as an experiment to Jamaica and that puny little shipment was enough our bureaucrats said, to tip CARICOM trade balance in our favor. If that is all it takes to make a positive trade balance, then CARICOM internal trade markets have to be some kind of joke? Or the salaried intelligentsia have no concept of what is necessary to make money and a profit on any deal?

I doubt there is enough trade to fill two very small 2000 ton, freight boats going counter clockwise circling CARICOM countries once a month? Or six converted shrimp trawlers doing a twice a week circuit?

The claim that many small

CARICOM countries that cannot afford it, bought our Belize bonds on the international market, fills me with dismay, shame and sadness. The essence of this argument by Sir Ronald Sanders was that the purchase was made as an emotional decision. A sort of family support for a sick relative?

I won't argue financial markets here, it is the differences of opinion that make financial markets work, but anybody that trades bonds based on emotions and not on financial worth, calculated risk and expected returns, is in for a sad surprise. Already our Belize bonds are junk bonds and the interest rates have been reduced from around 9% to 4 1/2%. You can do better than double that with a Certificate of Deposit at any private bank in Belize. Not counting the extension of years to maturity in our recent Belize replacement effort, which locks capital up that cannot be recycled to earn its worth in other

financial markets. As an intelligent responsible country government finance minister investment decision, leaves me aghast.

Most CARICOM governments have no solid based fiscal budgetary management practices and are in debt up to their eyebrows.

This doesn't lend much faith to a citizen, that they have any ability to manage a larger CARICOM nation. If those heavily indebted CARICOM nations cannot manage their own revenues and countries, how can anyone expect them to manage a larger CARICOM nation? Leadership has to be shown by example and paid in CASH. I would expect any future CARICOM leadership roles be restricted to CARICOM countries that show good fiscal management practices, proven by FOREIGN RESERVES double their GDP.

We in far away Belize certainly don't want incompetents running a CARICOM nation affecting our lives.

Oil - Boon or Bane Pt. II

 (Continued From Page 1) owners who own only the surface and not the minerals, but I have to lease both. Typically the 1/8th royalty is split with the mineral owner getting 7.5% and the surface owner 5.0%. As the oil company it is important to me that the surface owners get a fair share because if oil is discovered, we have a long term relationship and I want them to be happy.

Unfortunately BNE and the government worked out a different deal where the landowners get screwed. It was agreed that the government would get their 7.5% royalty (plus other government taxes) but the landowner would only get 5.0% of the 7.5%, which amounts to only 0.375%, when they should have been entitled to about 14 times as much.

But there is a bigger question still hanging. The original Crown land grants included the land and all which was above and below the surface. The government arbitrarily decided that they owned the minerals, although no agreement had ever been made with landowners, nor any compensation paid, which was of course in contradiction to the Crown land grants, our land laws and our Constitution. Two questions are unresolved: 1. who really owns the minerals? 2. what is a fair

compensation for landowners without mineral rights?

The Mennonites are pacifists and do not like confrontation so the government and BNE could easily bully them. But just suppose that the next well is drilled on the lands of Barry Bowen or Dan Silva? Bullies only pick on those they know they can whip. Take it a step farther and say the land was owned by Said Musa or Financial Wizard Ralph. The problems of who owns what and how much would be solved instantly!

IW. Why would GOB only agree to 5% of the 7.5% instead of the normal 5% of the total production? It wouldn't cost GOB anything and they would be protecting the rights of their people.

JC. "It actually gets worse. Certainly every government is responsible with protecting the rights of its citizens, but GOB is so desperate to cover up their outrageous financial incompetence that they don't give a damn about anything except what they can grab. Roughly (assuming 25% tax) GOB will get \$39.125 out of every \$100 of oil produced and the landowner will get 37 1/2 cents. Note that is cents. If the distribution was the standard 5%,

GOB would get \$37.52 out of every \$100 and the landowner would get \$5.00. Of course GOB would get their cut on all of the oil while the landowner would get the royalty only on the oil from his property.

"BUT GOB has decided that all of the royalty will be paid to them and then they will pay the landowner. Worse, the Geology department decided that no money should be paid until all drilling was completed within a field because everybody with land over the field should get a share. This is not only never done this way, it is ridiculous there is no way to absolutely determine the exact limit of an oil field, only the commercial limit. If someone comes in 20 years later and drills a well on the fringes of the field and gets commercial oil, it is preposterous to think he should be credited back through the 20 years of production, or that all of the royalty money should be held until the field is pumped out. This type of ignorance is only one of the problems that adds to the confusion. But in effect what it means is that GOB will never have to pay out even the piddling landowner 0.375% royalty.

IW. So what's the solution?

"There are many avenues.

1. Determine who is the legal owner of the minerals.
2. Use the standard oil royalty distribution that has worked well for so many years. Land owners who do not own their minerals should be paid a full 5% of the total production revenues from the first day of production.
3. direct all oil revenues or at least all oil royalties through a trust fund that has total transparency with annual auditing.
4. the trust fund should have professional management.
5. GOB should employ a competent and experienced oil professional to manage the government petroleum program, with such professional accountable to an independent board and the legislature. No Minister should have oversight or the power to over ride the laws or counter the decisions of the manager or trust board.
6. "All oil production should be metered for each and every well and should be published and reported to the public on a monthly basis.
7. Exploration and Petroleum Sharing Agreements with each and every oil company should be published and no secret deals allowed. That's a start!

Why I will join VIP

By Meb Cutlack

The tired refrain we are sure to hear from our current political leaders is that voting for a third party, or for independent candidates, is a waste of time and that even if elected they won't know how to govern.

Well, perhaps they won't know how to govern AS WE HAVE BEEN GOVERNED FOR THE PAST 26 YEARS but that's to our advantage.

The truth is that almost anyone could do better than those who have been in power ever since Independence.

I will join the VIP because their platform offers the prospect of true and honest government and the VIP makes it clear that it is their priority to introduce the safeguards needed to ensure such.

It is worth a minute to run through their manifesto and compare it to anything offered by either main party.

They will "reduce" the power of the

Cabinet by removing Financial control, Public Prosecutions, the Auditor General, the Contractor General and the Elections and Boundaries to a State Department under the office of the Governor General.

They will amend the Referendum Act to allow people to vote on important local national issues and allow a Recall Referendum on leaders who have lost the public trust.

The truth is that almost anyone could do better than those who have been in power ever since Independence.

The will amend the Constitution to give:

1. Belize an elected mixed member Senate with half the members elected mid-term.

2. The Prime Minister the power to choose his Cabinet from the public at large.

(I would subject this to less than 50%).

3. Limit the size of Cabinet to 9 ministers and place a two-term limit of the office of Prime Minister.

4. Enact stiff campaign finance laws to regulate the financing of political campaigns.

5. Amend the Freedom of Information Act to expedite access to government information.

6. Reinforce the autonomy of the Police.

7. Enforce UN and OAS anti-corruption laws.

Now, I would like them to add measures to remove land distribution - from

politicians of all shape and color. An alternate system would be to empower wide spectrum district committees to recommend all or any decisions regarding land allocation. Land distribution is currently an area fraught with corruption almost beyond description!

I will also join, and certainly back, any party such as VIP or We the People - or any individual candidate - who offers similar guarantees.

The time has come for Belizeans, for the first time in their lives, to vote for their own well being and that will only be served by 'ditching' both parties as they exist today. Can those parties change to meet the challenge? It is unlikely.

Can a group of now virtually unknown individuals mold themselves into a cohesive group to successfully govern Belize? They may well be able to - and they certainly can't do worse than the thieves and liars who have served Belize so inadequately for so long!

Guardian exposes Huge Land Theft

In a front page story last week The Guardian outlined a classic example of the extraordinary land fraud indulged in by the PUP government. They illustrated the story with a valuer's document showing how PUP crony Antonio Zabaneh made millions.

It is worth repeating the Guardian story here - in part at least - as it provides a rare insight into the regular manner in which PUP robs openly from the people of Belize to suit cronies.

After mentioning Pena's and Luke Espat's millions in DFC debt (and the case of Abdul Hamze who got \$11,000,000 from Government for the Mahogany 'Ruins' land) the Guardian cuts to the Zabaneh case.

The newspaper relates: "But there are simpler means of getting rich quick with the PUP. Consider the case of 1,500 acres of prime Government land near Punta Negra that was sold to Antonio Zabaneh. Initially, the Government had intended to sell Zabaneh the 1,500 acres plus another 535.93 acres.

"Prior to the closing of the sale, the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of the Punta Negra Village Council informed the Government in writing that a portion of the land was in the Payne's Creek Nature Reserve and that the sale was illegal since the Reserve's management or the Village Council were not consulted. They even complained that portions of the land were already owned by Villagers.

"Minister of Natural Resources Johnny Briceño responded only by restricting the sale to the 1,500 acres, and the Ministry of Natural resources proceeded with its arrangement. The land was surveyed, evaluated and ultimately sold to Antonio

Zabaneh. On the surface, the sale appears to be routine and just a case of an individual with the required resources purchasing land from Government. But a further analysis of the details is very revealing.

"Ultimately, the land was valued at \$50.00 per acre for a total of \$75,000 for 1,500 acres. The typical 10% Administration Fee produced a grand total of \$82,500.00. This was the final evaluation on the property and it was sold at that price.

"But on the sheet(s) of paper that accompanies all such land transactions as they make their way through the Ministry, which is(are) provided for officers of the Ministry or the Minister to register comments, the very same evaluator had, a couple of months previously, estimated the value of the land at a much higher rate.

"In his comments, the Ministry's evalu-

ator stated: "The market value for land around here is at about \$30,000.00 US per acre. If 500 per acre is considered high, then perhaps I can adjust to \$250."

"At that rate, Antonio Zabaneh was sold 1,500 acres of land that valued (1,500 x US\$30,000 =) US\$45 million for the comparable pittance of BZ\$82,500 (US\$41,250).

That would indeed transform anyone into an instant multi-millionaire, PUP style.

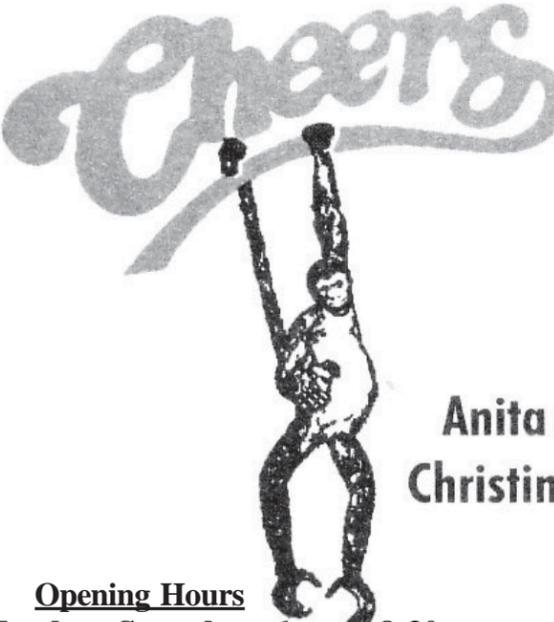
"Now, any reasonable person would argue that it would be impossible to sell each single acre of the 1,500 acre tract for US\$30,000. Most likely, only individual acres in specific locations would attract such a price. But it is very conceivable that with the right buyer or buyers, given the quality of the land, the entire tract could fetch at least 10% of the market value estimated by the Ministry's evaluator. This would still result in total

value of some US\$4.5 million, a far cry from the US\$41,250 paid by Zabaneh.

"The entire process was ultimately approved by Minister Johnny Briceño, who gave instructions to 'send out purchase letter' to Antonio Zabaneh, resulting in Zabaneh acquiring the land and immediately adding million\$ to his net worth."

The Guardian then states: "And the above is just the tip of the iceberg. The Guardian will follow up with additional tales in the weeks to come, of the raping of our natural resources by all manners of pirates closely associated with the PUP."

It is to be hoped that they also look into 'island' deals, which have enabled ministers Vildo Martin, Baeza and Ainslie Leslie to end up with choice island properties, and the system of issuing land conveyances and then not registering them until the land is 'resold' at a heavily inflated price - usually to a foreigner.



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TOPICAL TIDBITS



Bye bye sugar!

Trinidad and Tobago will shut down its centuries-old sugar industry, which was pushed to the brink of collapse by big cuts in subsidies from the European Union, agriculture officials said Wednesday. The twin-island Caribbean nation plans to shutter the sapped business after this year's cane crop is produced, Agriculture Minister Jarrette Narine told The Associated Press. "The prime minister agreed to shut down the sugar industry when the 2007 crop ends after the farmers asked him to do it," Narine said. Raffique Shah, chief of the Trinidad Cane Farmers Association, said Prime Minister Patrick Manning accepted a proposal to end all sugar production in the oil-and gas-rich country, which has built one of the region's fastest-growing economies around petroleum-based exports. "The industry is about to collapse, so let's have a soft landing for everyone," Shah said he told Manning at a Monday meeting.

Shah said the country's remaining

farmers have proposed that producers be paid compensation for stopping cane cultivation and expect government support when switching to another crop. He estimated that more than 22,000 acres (8,900 hectares) of cane fields would be freed for food production.



News from Iraq.

A reporter for TBRNews reports: "Mr. Gates (U.S. Sect. Defence) has... issued some orders intended for the brass... at the request of the President, he has ordered the Pentagon PR people to cut down "drastically" the death lists they report daily: "Far too many reported deaths are creating a very negative public image,".

The reporter adds: "I, personally, witnessed the Camp Falcon destruction... disaster last October. Terrible, heavy explosions all night from around midnight until the sun came up. Flames, smoke, and massive blasts made it impossible to sleep. And how did our PR

boys handle this? They didn't.

"There was an instant blackout which continues to this day. No one "unauthorized" is allowed to go near what is left of the camp and no reports of deaths or injuries (terrible burns on many we all know) are allowed and anyone stupid enough to dig into this gets only one warning."

And: "Reporting... Suicides, desertions, homosexual rapes, shooting and bayoneting civilians, including children, soaring drug use and, of course, many daily terrible deaths are verboten."

New crowd control?

From the BBC: "The US military has given the first public display of what it says is a revolutionary heat-ray weapon to repel enemies or disperse hostile crowds. Called the Active Denial System, it projects an invisible high energy beam that produces a sudden burning feeling. A beam was fired from a large rectangular dish mounted on a Humvee vehicle. The beam has a reach of up to 500 metres (550 yards), much further



than existing non-lethal weapons like rubber bullets. It can penetrate clothes, suddenly heating up the skin of anyone in its path to 50C. The London Guardian calls it: "A virtual flame-thrower... that microwaves enemies at 500 paces". And it, "is designed to make people feel they are about to catch fire and drop their weapons." It burns me up just to imagine it in the hands of Crispin and 'Small Change' in front of the our Parliament!

Visit The Belize Zoo

The Best Little Zoo In The World

Jungle Walk

The Pelican

*Independent Weekly would like to thank Katie Stevens for the following excerpt from her popular field guide, **Jungle Walk**.*

The brown pelican (*Pelicanus occidentalis*) is a large sea bird with a disproportionately big bill which may account for the fact that - although once in flight it is quite graceful - it tends to crash land on the water. Takeoff is even more hilarious, with a great flapping of wings and the splat of webbed feet trying to gain purchase on the insubstantial sea. Lift-off is ponderous, but soon the brown pelican is soaring - only to plummet out of the high-dive sky in pursuit of a snoozing snook, which



it scoops up into the soup tureen that is its beak .

An adult (at 3-5 years) female brown pelican weighs 2-5 kg.; the male is heftier and its wingspan longer. Gener-

ally, they are silvery or brown above, with a darker brown undercarriage, and have either a black or white neck and either a white or yellow head, depending on the season. Even the bill changes - to a reddish hue - at breeding time. The young brown pelican is a greater stickler for living up to its name, except for the indiscretion of its white belly.

A distensible gular pouch is situated beneath the bill. At rest, the brown pelican pants rapidly through its slightly-opened beak; this causes the pouch to flutter, which in turn blows air over the blood vessels of its thin skin and acts as a cooling technique. By keeping the beak and pouch directed away from the sun, using its head as a shield, the brown pelican increases the effect of this thermoregulation. This is why you will sometimes see dozens of these birds all pre-

cisely posed in the same direction.

The brown pelican can be found from North Carolina to northern Brazil on the Atlantic side of the New World, and from British Columbia to the south of Chile on the Pacific side.

In tropical areas, the nesting season may be ongoing year round. The eggs are laid asynchronously, with 3 to the usual clutch. Incubation takes about 30 days and caring for the chicks is a duty shared by both mother and father. In order to eat, the young must poke their beaks down their parents' throats, causing the regurgitation of semi-digested fish up from Nature's automatic food processor.

In the 60's and 70's there was a drastic reduction in the brown pelican population in the U.S. due to contamination from DDT and other pesticides which interfered with the calcium deposition of eggshells, so that they were too thin to withstand the rigors of being sat upon. The ban on DDT eventually allowed for a reversal of this trend .

WHERE WAS DENZIL JENKINS WHEN THE SALE OF SHARES IN CPBL WAS BEING DISCUSSED?

The Following Facts Speak for Themselves

- Fact 1:** Denzil Jenkins was Chairman of ICL, from March 28, 2001 to November 5, 2003.
- Fact 2:** Denzil Jenkins, ICL Chairman at CGA AGM, October 9, 2002: *"ICL has agreed to sell some shares as they only plan to keep not less than 51%"*.
- Fact 3:** Denzil Jenkins, ICL Chairman at CGA AGM, October 25, 2003: *"The net debt of the CPBL was US\$18.9 million at the time of purchase, with the assets...adjusted during 2003 to US\$41 million...the Company would be losing money and no dividends would be paid to citrus growers this year. Different options are being pursued to cover the debt now owing."*
- Fact 4:** Denzil Jenkins, CGA Special General Meeting, February 7, 2004, presented a case for growers to *"consider the sale of 90% of the shares in the Company for \$24 million"*. Growers present did not support Mr. Jenkins' recommendations.
- Fact 5:** Denzil Jenkins, Director of CGA Committee of Management and on CBPL Board since 2002.
- Fact 6:** Denzil Jenkins, removed as a CGA Director on April 9, 2005 for *"conduct prejudicial, by his submission for public consumption, through the print media, of information deemed to cast negative remarks on members of the Committee of Management, and found to be prejudicial to the Association."*
- Fact 7:** Denzil Jenkins, takes CGA Board to court and loses his case, also on appeal.
- Fact 8:** Denzil Jenkins, puts forward his name and is voted on again as a CGA Director, AGM February 11, 2006. Citrus Growers told of court cases, after Mr. Jenkins is voted back on the Committee of Management.
- Fact 9:** Denzil Jenkins, told Citrus Growers at AGM February 11, 2006: they would not receive any dividends from the Orange Growers Trust *"until twenty-one years after the last surviving descendant of King George the 5th of England had died"*, as the Trust did not represent shares in CPBL.
- Fact 10:** THIS WEEK, Dividends totaling \$70,955.31 are being paid to Citrus Growers, including Denzil Jenkins, with shares as part of the "Orange Growers Trust 2004 - 2005", and other small growers who are also shareholders!
- Fact 11:** THIS WEEK, Dividends totaling \$1,944,499.37 are being received on behalf of all growers, including Denzil Jenkins, through the CGA Investment Company Limited!
- Fact 12:** PROJECTIONS by end September 2007: CPBL will pay additional dividends of approximately \$101,220.00; and ICL will pay another \$2,142,000.00 in dividends.

**DENZIL JENKINS WAS ALWAYS INVOLVED AND BENEFITTING!
WHY IS HE NOW WAGING THIS WAR AGAINST THE CITRUS GROWERS OF BELIZE?**

Inspired Insights



Certainty Vs Certitude



By Rev'd Canon LeRoy Flowers

Recently a priest in a congregation in the USA made the news by saying members should leave the congregation if they voted for the presidential candidate he opposed.

The way religion is used to polarize society scares me. Such division is not the work of Christ, who reconciles and unites, but of a diabolic power delighting in human being cut off from one another and from the source of life and power.

Keeping this man in mind, let's ask a theological, not a political, question. For a Christian for someone who seeks, however imperfectly, to follow Jesus, which is more important—your approximation to some plum line of right belief, or your relationship to the One whom those beliefs point?

This priest focused on what was believed and made judgments based on the assumptions he was right, using the place he stands as the plum line. This priest who was fired, missed the whom of belief, the One who meets us all, where we are and gently calls us out of hardness of heart and into love.

Love is a relationship with a 'whom', not a political quantity, a political party as many would have us believe. Love has the best interests of each of us at heart and in mind.

Do we stand in certainty, assured of the rightness of our belief and

worldview? Or do we stand in certitude with Paul, saying, "for I know whom I have believed.....?" (2Tim 1:12) Certainty needs everything black and white, cut and dry, unambiguous. Certitude makes room for mystery and wonder and grace. Whom have you believed?

The Christian life calls us to walk by faith, not by sight. God weans us from dependence on the constructs in our minds to dependence on relationship, with God alone. As we grow in this relationship, we become less certain of our answers, but more sure footed in our not knowing. As love makes demands on us, humility grows..... which is so lacking in the Christian community. We come to trust the One we've believed instead of what we've believed and indeed not the system and politicians.

When the priest measured rightness of belief, his own position was the starting point. Hear this though: using ourselves as the measure of right and wrong, good and bad or as the measure for any other life requires putting ourselves in the place of God, in our lives, as well as in the lives of any others we measure. The theological term for this is idolatry.

The priest in his arrogance and self centered righteousness set limitations on the body of Christ based on his personal beliefs. He sought to exclude people from fellowship and worship naming them non-Christians because of politics. Jesus never went to those already pure, especially as defined by Jewish purity laws. Jesus sought those in need of love and the truth and new life. He didn't try to find those who believed exactly as he did.

We are all sinners. We won't stand perfectly in love or faith, but we can ask for grace to try... but not on political beliefs or parties

Belize & Honduran fishermen share concerns

Excerpted from www.7newsbelize.com of January 19, 2007

"Jules Vasquez Reporting, Complex fisher folk issues prevail in this area - known as the Amatique Bay, specifically the Sarstun region. Complex because aretesenal fishing communities on both sides realize that fish stocks are being rapidly depleted. And while they have different flags - they share the same fisheries resource.

And that resource is being diminished largely because of vessels like this. It's a shrimp trawler - we encountered it yesterday afternoon working here on the Guatemalan side, just outside of Belizean waters. We had to keep our distance to stay within those Belizean waters. And that's what we saw in the day, SATIIM's rangers says they have visited at night and found 60 trawlers - that's 6-0 all working in this same area - on the Belizean side as well. It's a huge problem for communities on both sides, and Morales and Marin say it's something that must be addressed.

Hon. Vildo Marin, Minister of Fisheries "These people, the community people here in Sarstoon, they have a petition to the government to regulate more this kind of fishing."

Jules Vasquez, Are you alarmed at the reports of industrial trawlers operating in this area as described by the SATIIM park rangers, 60 of them, does that alarm you?

Hon. Vildo Marin, Minister of Fisheries Yes it does."

Jules Vasquez, Is there anything we can do about it?

Hon. Vildo Marin, Well hopefully we can continue the conversation. Definitely these trawlers are destroying the sea bed and further damaging the resources. Certainly we have to do something about it."

But what is that something? That's what fisher folk and policymakers from both Guatemala and Belize gathered at the Parish Hall in Punta Gorda to discuss yesterday. It's the first ever Bi-national Fisheries Forum and while the languages may have been different, the concerns were the same.

Greg Choq - Executive Director - SATIIM "The fishermen and other resource users of the region have recognized the bleak future that lies ahead should the current trend of resource extraction be maintained. It is clear that if we do not take active and aggressive measures to safeguard our marine resources, the livelihood of many of our communities will collapse. The problems are complex and require a range of different actions to be changed."

Alvin Laredo, President SATIIM & Barranco Resident "Fish, including

snook, snapper, bonefish, shrimps etc. are all observed to be in a decline. 67% of the fishermen said that the fish were smaller. 70% of the fishermen say there were fewer fishes."

Fisherman from Barra Sarstun #1, "The puzzle here is where are the fishes or are we finishing with them. This has really increased the poverty line within the coastline of these communities."

Fisherman from Barra Sarstun #2, "The reason why we don't want no fishing is because the area for fishing is too small and when these big ships come in, there is no lobster, no money, and so since the space is limited, it is not possible for us with small boats to continue."

Hortencia Reyes - Fisherman from Livingston "You can't tell the fishermen you cannot do no fishing. What option does he have otherwise?"

Angelica Mendez, Fisher Folk from Livingston "We are aware that the resources we have is depleting and we know and we have some questions. We are not certain if the fishes are coming less and less because of pollution, tourism, or climactic change. Life of fishermen is difficult, hard, and the fish stock is becoming less and less. We don't have an option. I don't know what will follow."

And that fear of a future where the only certainty seems to be that stocks will decline, has created a sense of urgency on both sides of the Sarstoon. But because it is a border area, the issues are complex. This fisherman for example is from Barra Sarstun; he is a Guatemalan and as you can see his boat is loaded with nets; most likely those nets will end up being cast in Belizean waters.

Greg Choq, "Definitely the biggest problem is over fishing and Guatemalan fishermen encroaching on Belizean waters, extracting resources that creates a problem for the Belizean fishermen because we find that the Guatemalan fisher folks are more aggressive and assertive and so they dominate the area, pushing out the traditional Belizean fishermen. That's a big political problem but it is also I think, with enforcement, we can mitigate that."

Hon. Vildo Marin, "Certainly we have to put more monies into enforcement, that's definite. We are trying our very best from our own resources, put more money into the Fisheries Department to do just that."

What wasn't addressed in the story but figures prominently is the issue of Guatemalan fisher folk who are licensed to fish in Belize. It's a politically explosive issue because critics say that in many cases these fishermen are licensed, and granted nationality documents in exchange for votes at election time.

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Holy Cross Anglican School thanks donors

Update - Holy Cross Anglican School Greetings and Happy New Year from Holy Cross Anglican School in San Pedro, Belize!!

Many thanks to each of you for your continuing support and prayers for this incredible, not-so-little-anymore school. We rejoice that 153 children are now enrolled at Holy Cross - most for the first time ever - and that 15 special needs children are receiving care and guidance in our Special Education Unit!

Three additional buildings are under construction - our Chapel/canteen/multipurpose building, the school kitchen/caretakers home and an additional Standard I classroom. Seven more classrooms and a school office/health clinic will be built, God willing, prior to the opening of school in September 2007.

We project a student enrollment of 350 by then as we will offer three Infant I (kindergarten) classes, two Infant II (first grade), two Standard I (second grade) and one class each for Standard II, III, IV, V, and VI. Our goal is to provide an education to ALL children unable to attend other schools due to lack of space or financial constraints.

Needless to say, none of this would have been (or will be!) possible without the generosity of folks like you. Every nail, every desk, every pencil, every piece of food - literally everything at Holy Cross - has been donated or bought with contributions from our caring friends. Thank you so very much!!!

And a special 'thank you' goes to all those who responded to the Vitamin Drive!! I'm thrilled to say we have at least a two year supply of vitamins on hand - that's a LOT of vitamins! - so we are removing vitamins from the Holy Cross "Wish List". There are, however, just a few things we still need (smile) so I've put our updated requests at the end of this email.

I only wish I could raise money as quickly as those vitamins poured in!! Unfortunately it takes a lot of money to operate and grow Holy Cross School - especially when the students are poor, the government is broke and most folks think Belize is a wealthy tourist destination. Our students need your help. They are counting on their unseen friends, we're counting on you and so is God. Remember, you are God's hands and feet on this earth - He doesn't ask you to save the whole world (I think that's Someone else's job!). But He does ask you to do what you can to help those you know are in need.

Here's what we're facing.....
LANDFILL: costs \$60US for a small dump truck load that would fill a child's



In the absence of desks and chairs, the students at Holy Cross Anglican School sat on the floor when the facility first opened..

sandbox. We literally need TONS of dirt/sand to convert the swamp the school is being built in into dry land. We must 'fill as we go' so that the pilings for new buildings can be sunk to bedrock.

FEEDING PROGRAM: Our children are poor and come to school hungry. Everyday we provide a protein rich breakfast, mid-morning fruit snack and hot, nourishing lunch at NO COST to our students since the need is great and few could pay. It is costing right at \$5US per student per week which is extremely reasonable. But, what is 'reasonable' for one student becomes expensive for 153!! It takes about \$750US per week to provide food, purified water, utilities and labor for our Feeding Program. I get slightly ill when I think what the price tag will be for 350 children!!!

CLASSROOMS: We order our Belizean 'pre-fab' buildings from a generous company in the western part of Belize which sells us the 'pieces and parts' at cost. The parts are trucked to Belize City then loaded onto barges, shipped to San Pedro, offloaded, trucked to the bridge then carried to the school site by our little bobcat and several Belizean laborers. Pilings are sunk, the floor in 4 parts laid down, walls erected and roofing timbers installed. We then have to purchase and install the roofing materials, windows (wooden slats), doors, wiring, lighting, wall boards, paint and decking lumber. From initial order to the classroom being ready for students, the cost is just at \$10,000US per building - materials, transportation and labor. We currently have 5 classrooms in operation (\$50,000US), 4 buildings under construction as our Chapel is two buildings

combined (\$40,000US) and are planning for 8 additional buildings (\$80,000US) for September 2007.

Holy Cross has launched our first ever fundraiser with the printing of our 'Faces of the Future' school calendars. They are being sold in most of our local stores, for \$20BZ or \$10US and we're praying they do well - smile. Many thanks go to local volunteers Marilyn Marx, Cullen Walker, Paul Jewitt, Laurie Norton and Marie from Gecko Graphics who got this calendar put together in less than a week - WOW!

Please send checks made payable to: "Holy Cross Anglican School" to: Mrs. Francis Wilson, Anglican Diocese of Belize, PO Box 535, Belize City, Belize
Or, if you would rather give supplies, here is the Holy Cross updated "Wish List":

Children's books, Hand sanitizer, fat pencils, fat crayons, coloring books,

Easter activity books, Easter children's books, short sleeved, button up, white shirts: size 6 - 14 (school uniform), gray shorts: sizes 6 - 14 (school uniform), Gray long pants: sizes 6 - 14 (school uniform), wooden puzzles, batteries: AAA, AA, C; Children's exercise books, book-bags, tennis shoes - sizes 1 - 6 (not the little kids sizes), underwear - girls and boys: sizes 4 - 14, small items we can use as little prizes, teacher charts, Educational toys, plastic lunch size plates - 350, plastic cups - 6oz - 350, Plastic bowls - 350, White board markers - fat ones, Tape - scotch tape, duct tape and brown plastic packaging tape, Folks and spoons - 350, Multi-piece puzzles, Packing tape - brown plastic, Long flat erasers, Stickers, Tambourines, drums, simple instruments, Dress-up clothes, Halloween costumes, Face painting materials and sugarless gum.

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- * mahogany cabinets
- * utility room

SAFETY/EMERGENCY FEATURES

- * Hurricane shelter with metal windows and ferro concrete roof

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- * decorative plants & 20 fruit trees
- * pagoda
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- * 6' security fence
- * motion detector spotlights
- * off street parking for one or two cars
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Is the Hon. Said Musa Finally Moving in The Right Direction?

Contributed

On national radio on Thursday January 25, 2007, the Honorable Said Musa made his position in respect to education clear. He said **all of Belize's children are entitled to a good education.** Such positive thinking is commendable.

And not surprising, for in my view, when the Hon. Said Musa was Minister of Education many considered him the best Minister of Education that the country ever had.

This year the Honorable Said Musa will host, in Belize, the Forum of Presidents of the Legislative Bodies of Central America and the Caribbean (FOPREL). FOPREL places **emphasis on education as a central issue to reach higher levels of development** in Central America and the Caribbean. Belize can become the shining example for the remainder of Central America and the Caribbean and reach to the desirable higher level of development.

The Cabinet has directed the Ministry of Education to investigate cases where students are denied the issuance of report cards and even access to school for non-payment of fees. The investigation should be short, lead to the abolition of harmful practices and assist Belize's children in the future.

No doubt the Ministry will find it is far too common for schools to withhold report cards until all back fees are paid and to prohibit children from continuing their education by preventing their registration for the next semester until all back fees are paid in full. Some schools



Prime Minister Said W. Musa (photo by Richard Holder).

are bold enough to put their demands in writing. PSE, CXC, and ATLIB examinations must be paid for in advance or the student is refused his or her right to take the examination.

Among the worst offenders was a school that would not allow a student to take the semester's final exam unless the student paid an examination fee of \$190 in advance. The student's surviving parent did not have the \$190 therefore, even though the student had completed a semester's work she could not take the examination, obtain a grade and

pass to the next level!

The Hon. Said Musa is off to a great start. He should be commended for the meritorious action he is taking and be encouraged to proceed further to really reform Education.

The Honorable Johnny Briceño, Deputy Prime Minister, deserves credit too, for he has been involved for years in assisting hundreds of needy children in their efforts to obtain an education. He is a Director of a Charitable Education Foundation that has been paying the fees for many children who have been

denied their report card and paying the fees for many children who have been denied their right to register and proceed with their education due to their inability to pay past fees.

The Reverend Canon Flowers, President of Belize's Council of Churches, is involved in the struggle to standardize text books. He is attempting to do away with a problem that has deprived thousands of children of their right to an education during the past 30 years. The Hon. Said Musa is the person with the knowledge and ability to bring about such standardization.

Standardization of text books would aid everyone: the schools, teachers, parents and children. Standardization of text books would not present any new cost to the Government, but would result in substantial savings to the students and provide for a better education system. The lowered cost of books would allow thousands of additional students, who could not otherwise do so, to afford books and attend the First through Fourth forms of high school.

Education Reform is the best and probably the only means of reducing poverty and crime. It is also a means of improving Belize's economy with an educated work force. Such an educated work force would be a means of developing Belize's economy to a higher level.

There is no greater good that the Prime Minister can do than continue his meritorious efforts to improve education. The improvement is something that **all of the people benefit** from and certainly would be grateful for.

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ARIES (Mar. 21- April 20)

Don't consume more than necessary. Your high energy will enable you to take the role of leader in group functions. Arguments will flare up if you get backed into an emotional corner. You may have problems with children. You're undergoing changes. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

TAURUS (Apr. 21- may 21)

You need to look into new philosophies. You can expect sorrow to evolve from the information you discover. Younger relatives may seek your advice. Plan your social events carefully. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21)

Put your efforts into moneymaking ventures. Romance is quite possible if you are willing to approach someone who interests you. Don't push your opinions on others this week or you may find yourself in the doghouse. Family outings that aren't expensive will be enjoyable and help strengthen ties. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Turn your present relationship around or start a new one. Plan a trip to the country or take a drive to the beach. Don't overspend on luxury items. Outings with relatives or good friends will provide you with stimulating conversation. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

LEO (July 23-Aug 22)

Overindulgence could lead to problems with digestion. Do not be surprised if your partner doesn't understand your needs. There's a good chance that they won't come back. Look for professional guid-

ance if it will help unite the family. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 -Sept. 23)

Do what you can but don't jeopardize your health trying to please everyone. Sentimental feelings may make it difficult to get much done at work. You can pick up wonderful buys if you really look hard this week. Someone you least expect may not have your best interests at heart. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 -Oct. 23)

This will not be the day to start new business ventures or make drastic changes in your career. Your involvement with children will be most rewarding. Don't turn down offers that include sports activities or children. You can expect to experience delays or additional red tape if you deal with institutions. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)

You may need a physical outlet that will help you relieve your tension. Make sure to arrange in advance to spend quality time together. Be inquisitive about unfamiliar circumstances. Focus your efforts on your work. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 -Dec. 21)

Don't let your emotions interfere with completing your chores. Think twice before you say something you might regret later. Extend an invitation to clients you enjoy spending time with. Your hypnotic eyes will capture the hearts of those who interest you. Your lucky day this

Yo ho, yo ho...

(Continued From Page 4)
because of any financial entanglements, but in case they happen to shoot some slave standing next to their truck in the street, or mash down some peasants plodding down the road.

They are just peons anyway, whose sole function is to pay taxes and vote as they are told. Drafted into the service of the pirates who boarded their ship of state and com-

mandeered their government. If they give too much trouble, make them walk the plank.

"Me? A Pirate? Why Governor, I must admit I am flattered by the description, but I assure you I ply an honest trade, just cutting some logwood in the Bay, just a hundred few thousand slaves and little ole me...but if ever there is anything I can do for your esteemed person, you have but to ask..."

On Prisons of the Mind

"It is perfectly possible for a man to be out of prison and yet not free - to be under no physical constraint and yet to be a psychological captive, compelled to think, feel and act as the representatives of the national state or of some private interest within the nation, wants him to think feel and act.

"The nature of psychological compulsion is such that those who act under constraint remain under the impression that they are acting on their own initiative. The victim of mind-manipulation does not know that he is a victim. To him the walls of his prison are invisible, and he believes himself to be free. That he is not free is apparent only to other people. His servitude is strictly objective."

Excerpted from "Brave New World Revisited" by Aldous Huxley, 1958

week will be Monday.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22.- Jan. 20)

Help if you can, but more than likely it will be sufficient just to listen. Responsibilities with respect to older relatives may be a burden. You can make money through real estate or by using your head when it comes to personal investments. Get into some activities that will help you in making new friends. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 -Feb. 19)

Don't let opposition from those envious of your talents daunt your

progress. Travel and creative hobbies will be your best outlet. Concentrate on your job. If you are not already, think about going into business for yourself. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

PISCES (Feb. 20-Mar. 20)

You'll find it easy to meet new people. Investments may not be as lucrative as you thought. Make sure you concentrate if operating machinery or vehicles. Don't start any arguments unless you're prepared to accept irrevocable results. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



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Nothing says you are in Corozal country like a good top shelf Tamales. Although they only make them on Saturdays, this is the day of the week when we all make our Chetumal run, so it is convenient to us all. Why stop in Orange Walk for a greasy tacos snack, when the great Corozal secret awaits. Now the secret Jo Mel In is out. They serve two types of chicken tamales and both bring out the Spanish in us. I had to stop myself at two, but I did bring back enough for the week. And the price well, it can't be beat...anywhere. I had been told about the "tamales dat di come" by many up north, but I was truly not prepared for the full Corozal Tamales Effect. Two words to the wise, careful with the pepper and get there between 10-12pm to ensure you get your fair share or do what this reviewer does...call ahead!

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Kremandala Show Parting Shot by Patrick Rogers

January 30, 2007

Greetings Krem Radio TV and Internet Listeners at home and abroad, fellow panelist. On January 17th, 2007, our party, Vision Inspired by the People (VIP), held a press conference to launch our National Direction. This decision was taken by the pro-tem Executive body of VIP in an effort to start discussions and consultations on the way forward for Belize.

VIP has laid out a New Direction for a New Generation where All Must Benefit. Our Direction is built around five (5) required pillars of Nationhood. **1st National Unity** – a people become a nation only when they struggle together upholding their responsibilities and rejoice together enjoying their rights. **2nd A Culture of Productivity** – with appropriate education the people will innovate to improve the environment while government must motivate and maintain the environment. **3rd A Family Life Environment** – Our children

are the lifeline of our nation. The family unit provides protection for their survival and development. **4th Social Justice** – Economic prosperity and political power are meaningless if not accompanied by personal dignity. **5th Fair Representation** – Government must reflect the People's will.

One of the direction under the pillar for Social Justice states, "The INTEGRITY of the Public Service must be restored to make government effective and efficient." Allow me to illustrate – take the Ad I saw in the newspapers last week advertising for two (2) Assistant Comptroller of Customs. The Ad went on to state that the applicants must have a Masters Degree and must be between the age of 25 - 45 years old.

Before I continue, I must state for the record that I believe that some of our brightest minds are currently in the Customs Department – these are brothers and sisters that did not get a chance to go further than 6th Form here in Belize

due to negligence of the PUDP administrations of old. Any of these existing customs officers could have completed any University anywhere.

This move being initiated by the Centralized National Government is going against the Laws of Belize as I understand them. The Public Service Commission is the legally constituted body to hire for pay-scale 9 or above – how is it then that a retired Assistant Comptroller, who was re-hired as a contract officer to be an Advisor to the Comptroller is hiring two additional Assistant Comptrollers from outside the Department under the authority of the Ministry of Finance – not the PSC. So where is the PSC on this issue? Imagine what this will do to the dignity and morale of those officers with over twenty years in the department. These decisions deteriorate the Integrity of the Public Service.,

I Love You Belize! Freedom For All, With Equal Rights And Justice!

Small Ax, big tree

(Continued From Page 1)

has ever gotten into, and it was so bad that when it was done, McSweeney said he needed a hug.

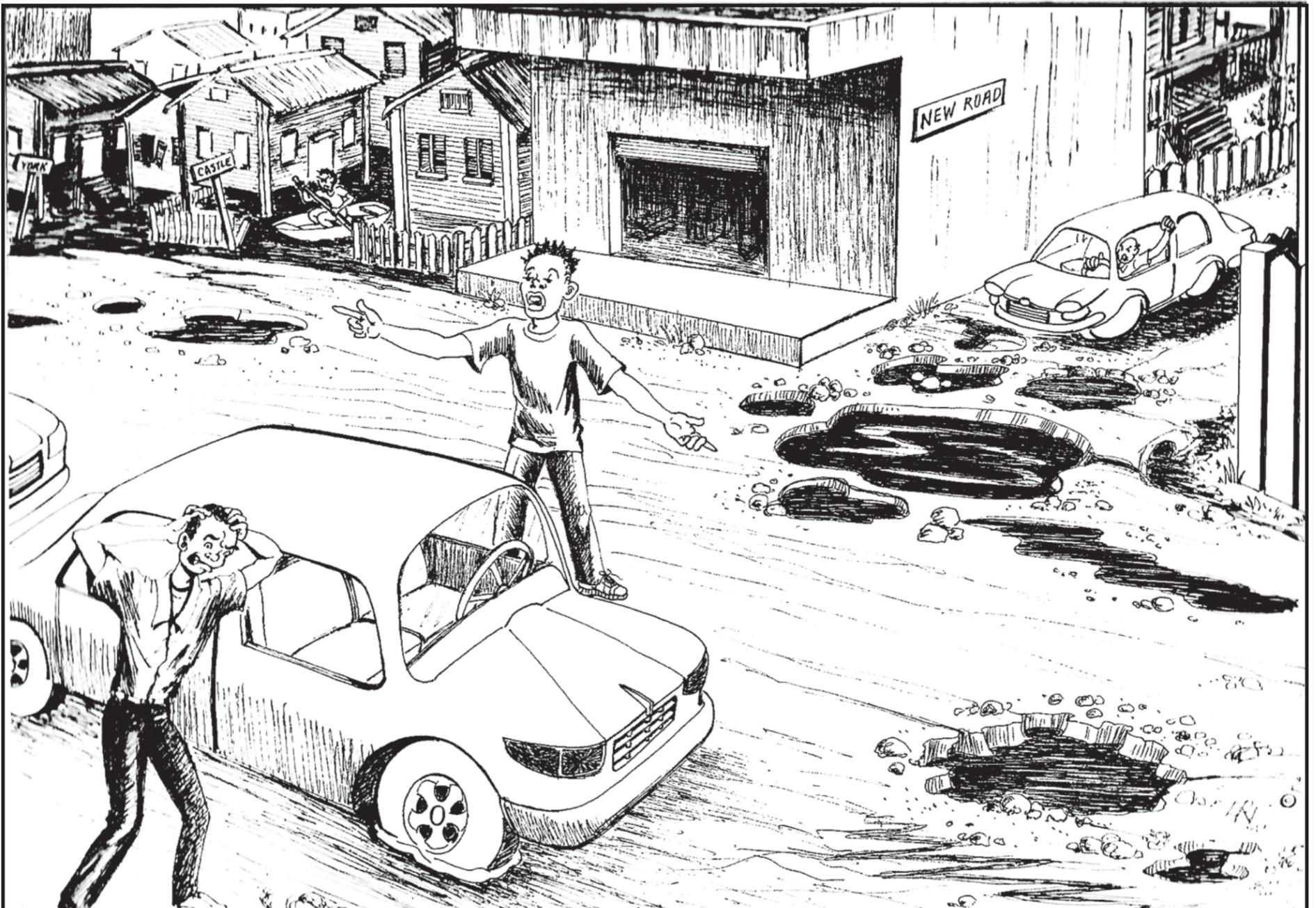
Merlene Bailey-Martinez, "With pre-payment penalty, it is \$9.7 million."

Hugh McSweeney, "I know about that. It was in fact, he came to my desk to deal with that and I really had to get moral support when I had to deal with that because it was too high for me to deal with on my own." (laughter)

McSweeney served as Financial Secretary until October of 2004. His departure from the Ministry of Finance came shortly after the man who had handpicked him for the job, Ralph Fonseca, lost the Finance Ministry in the G-7 shake-up...

David Novelo was supposed to have followed McSweeney on the stand this afternoon (Friday, February 2) but there was no time, so he has been rescheduled.

The Belizean public cannot help but tune in next week for the next chapter in "Through the Looking Glass" and see who else comes to tea.



"Dis da the third! X@! flat ah get ena di laas foa monts! Wat di hell is guvment doing wid di Car Licensing an Drivers' Licensing money?"
 "No complain bass! Property Taxes suppose to tek care a di streets, but yu notice every street corner now have a swimming pool and the Castle and York Street residents, and Glen Street pan Southside, deh feel like den de da Venice!"

Editor's Note: We apologize to the cartoon editorial board & the artist for the inadvertent omission of the punch line of the cartoon published on Friday, Jan 19 issue, Volume 2 No. 3 - blame it on printer's devil. We reproduce it here in its entirety.
 The new rebel reform paper (the only paper with serious district issue news) is now online at www.belize news.com, www.belize north.com and www.belizean.com

Rigoberta Menchu eyes Guat presidency



GUATEMALA CITY (Reuters) - Guatemala 's Maya Indian Nobel laureate Rigoberta Menchu said on Wednesday she may run for president this year in a bid to become the second indigenous head of state in Latin America .

Menchu, a defender of Maya Indian victims of Guatemala 's bloody 1960-96 civil war and who grew up speaking no Spanish, said several political parties had asked her to run as president or vice president in the September 9 election.

"We are seriously considering the proposals," she told reporters after marking the death of her father and over 30 other human rights activists in a January 31, 1980 government raid on the Spanish Embassy in Guatemala City .

About 200,000 people were killed in the civil war, most of them poor Maya Indians. Menchu was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 for her human rights work.

Guatemalans will vote for president in a September 9 election that could go through to a second round in November.

If Menchu wins, she would follow the footsteps of Evo Morales who last year became Bolivia 's first indigenous president. Latin America 's Indian population suffers massive discrimination despite being a majority in several countries.

"There are some Guatemalans who would be very scared to see Rigoberta Menchu as president because they are racists," said the 48-year-old Menchu, who wears traditional Mayan clothes elaborately embroidered with birds and flowers.

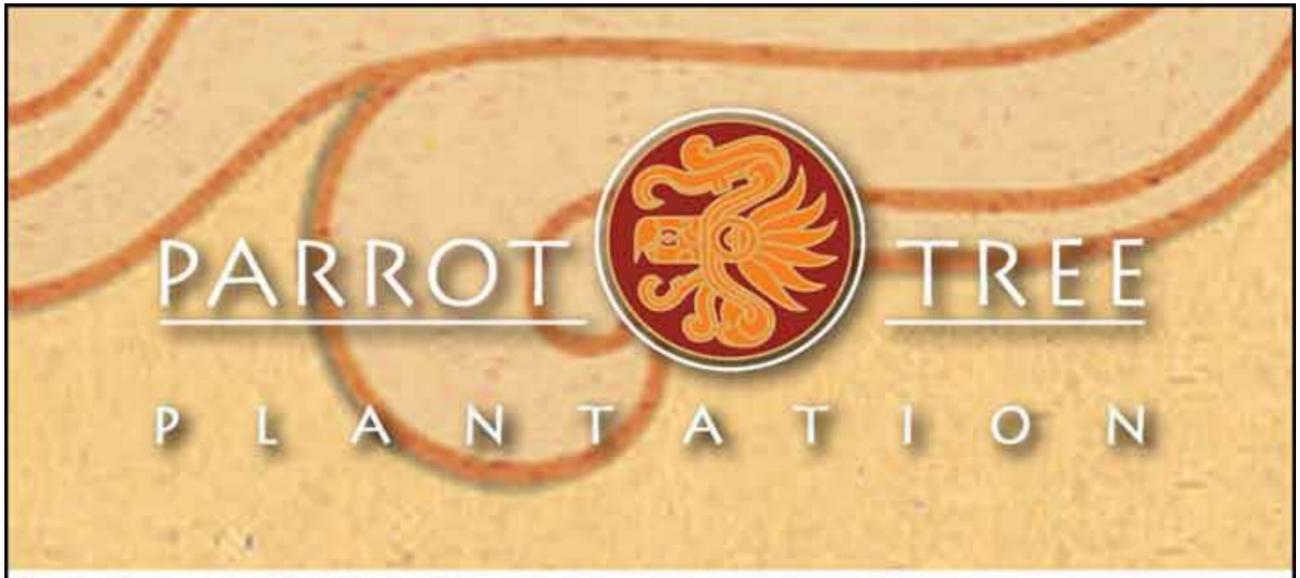
The left-leaning Together for Guatemala coalition headed by congresswoman Nineth Montenegro told local media it planned meetings with Menchu to discuss a candidacy.

A U.N.-backed truth commission found that over 80 percent of the civil war 's victims were Mayan Indians, mostly killed by armed forces during a scorched-earth campaign against leftist guerrillas that targeted rural villages and community leaders.

Gen. Otto Perez Molina, an army commander at the height of the war in the Quiche region where Menchu was born and which was hit hardest by army and paramilitary massacres, is running for president with the Patriotic Party.

Former dictator Efraim Rios Montt, who has been accused by Menchu in Spanish courts of ordering genocide during his brief 1982-3 rule, will likely run for Congress.

Menchu 's brother and mother were also tortured and killed during the Cold War-era conflict, which ended with peace accords in 1996 but left deep scars among the Mayan inhabitants of Guatemala 's divided and dirt-poor countryside.



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