

# The INdependent

*Reform for the People*

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# Belize oil fiasco

**By Des Parrett**

I went to see the Old One who lives at the ruins. I told him I was confused about oil. Oil is so important that the US and Britain invaded Iraq and threatened other Middle Eastern countries to protect their oil supplies. Oil has made a lot of desert folks rich enough to trade in their mangy camels for a Mercedes or Rolls Royce. Oil has solved many of the financial problems of the struggling Third World countries. In fact oil seems to be the most important issue in world commerce today, so if oil is that important, why the Hell doesn't somebody tell us what is going on with our oil in Belize?

"The best information comes for those involved," the Old One said. "Go directly to the sources, to the people involved and ask your questions."

That made sense so I tried GOB, and found that our government knows that we have oil, but that seems to be about all they know. How much oil? This is yet to be determined. How will it benefit us Belizeans? This is yet to be determined.



*Photo: Michael Stravato -The New York Times*

Will it be good for Belize like it is for other countries? Obviously. How? Well, this is yet to be determined. Will our schools

and hospitals benefit? Within government projects benefit according to their priority. Hmmm. What's that supposed to mean?

So I tried BNE and found that the oil company also knows we have oil. How much? Sorry, they are not at liberty to discuss that. How will the oil revenues help Belize? Sorry, that's a question the government must answer. Will it be good for Belize? Oh certainly. We are doing great things and have created a lot of new jobs for Belizeans. Aha! Now I have found a benefit. Have the oil activities created any big problems? Sorry, but they are not at liberty to discuss that. But whatever problems there are will be eliminated when the pipeline is finished. Are there any other good things Belizeans can expect from the oil production besides a few jobs? Sorry, that's a question the government must answer. Hmmm.

It appears that those directly involved with GOB and BNE, don't have anything directly to say. Maybe those directly affected could help, so I talked to the Mennonites at Spanish Lookout. I hit a mother lode of information.

"Has the oil production affected the community," I asked a Mennonite I know (Please Turn To Page 13)

## A new party

**Contributed**

There has been talk of a Third Political Party to compete with the two powerful ones we already have. Is this a good idea?

The problem is not one of numbers, but of color. When it comes to giving the people a choice, 3 parties should be better than 2, but if it is numbers that count then 10 parties should even better... and it probably would be. We now have a BLUE party and a RED party. If you mix RED and BLUE together and form a new party you get a PURPLE party. What have you gained? Let's look at it from an operational perspective. If you start with a party of thieves and a party of robbers and then you form a party of bandits, you have given the people a wider choice, but is it a better choice? It certainly is NOT a wiser choice because the results will be the same.

On the other hand, if you want to form a YELLOW party that shines with a sunlight to illuminate mismanagement, dishonesty, and

incompetence, or a WHITE party that will clean out corruption and truly serve the interest of the people, then a new party or even two new parties would be better because you have created a broader, wiser and better choice for the people. But where do you get new party people who think YELLOW-honesty or WHITE-anticorruption? It takes only a very little touch of either RED or BLUE to quickly spoil the purity of the color, the purity of the ideology.

In a recent article 'Pussy Foot' expounded on the needs for an elected Senate, rightly implying that a Senate with equal footing with the Representatives would create better checks and balances. You go to a doctor today and he will give you medicine to cure the symptoms that give you discomfort. Your body is supposed to eventually correct the disease that causes the symptoms. New parties and elected Senates are medicines that can cure the political symptoms, but there is no body that

can correct the disease of corruption which remains and festers... and eventually will be fatal.

Our political system is the core disease that not only causes the symptoms of corruption, dishonesty, incompetence and mismanagement, but makes these practices inevitable. The British Empire perfected a program of rape, pillage and plunder of their colonies over some three centuries of intensive practice. They convinced the colonial "natives" that their British government had all the answers, and it was everybody's duty to accept such governmental guidance and dictates without questioning.

Sensing the Empire was dying, colonies began to demand the right to govern themselves, and the officials of the crumbling Empire, aghast that mere "natives" should even think they were capable of self government, turned their backs and walked away. There was no effort to train or educate their replacements.

If the "natives" were stupid enough to believe they were as capable as their British "superiors", then let them (Please Turn To Page 6)

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# Letter to the Editor

Editorial Director

Meb Cutlack

Editor

Karla Heusner Vernon

General Manager

Trevor Vernon

Advertising

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(501) 225-3520

Email:

[independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com](mailto:independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com)

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## 100% increase in work permit fees

Dear Editor,

I have been here just over a year now and have applied for residency, my first interview is 18th January, my work permit runs out on the 23rd of January. So I went to ask for an extension and was told that I have to apply again from scratch.

I thought this was madness as they already have all my details and nothing has changed, but no I have to fill in all the same forms again and this time it is going to cost me \$2,000 for a work permit, when it only cost \$1,000 this time last year!

I have been employing Belizeans in my business for a year, not taking a wage for myself and won't be this year, but because I own the bussiness

I have to pay the \$2,000 for a work permit.

This is really crazy and frustrating, especially if it take another 2 years for my residency to come through. Someone needs to put this system to rights.

Signed: Jane Beard

## Suggestion for Rufus X

Dear Brother Rufus:

It is so refreshing to hear you each week on the KREMANDALA Show talking about "men being manly". I think it would be a good idea if you would publish a "Manly Manifesto" so these terrible politicians can have some "manly" guidelines. I would like to forward a few suggestions: A) Men who have children out of

wedlock, including current & former ministers, should be man enough to make the children carry their names. B) Ministers in Government should abolish GST on medicines and doctor fees: after all nobody buys illness. C) Abolish GST on tires and spare parts since government seems incapable of fixing our roads and developing our infrastructure. D) Allow entry for all Belizeans into the Free Zones; after all Belize is for Belizeans- is that not they continually tell us? E) Be manly enough to properly manage Belize's single budget, since innumerable housewives seem not only efficient at handling her home budget but also the budget at work!

Respectfully: T. Thompson



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# Are All Cruise Ship Programs Bad?

By Punta Gorda correspondent

There has been a lot of good debate about the cruise ship industry, mostly pointing out the potential negative effects, and it's important for our people to know this. It seems to me that the main issues are the number of passengers, what they do, and were and to whom the money goes.

However I believe when properly planned, regulated and supervised, the cruise ship industry can be beneficial to our environment and society. The eco-tourism part of the Toledo People's Eco Park Plan has two small cruise ship programs. Many believe these can provide badly needed economic income, support NGOs working on environmental and cultural conservation, as well as the local businesses and the general public both in the rural villages and Punta Gorda Town.

The program "The Gulf of Honduras Mini Caribbean Cruise," is a three day two night regional tourism package. It opens the bottleneck between Livingston Guatemala and Placentia Belize via Punta Gorda Town and Monkey River. A small ferry, capacity 100 passengers, leaves Guatemala 6:00 a.m. and arrives PG Town by 7:00 a.m., clears customs in time for breakfast at 7:30 a.m., ready to take a wide variety of tours offered by the local tour operators, toledo tour guide association in the rural villages and in and around Punta Gorda Town. The visitors choose which restaurants and hotels they want to sleep and eat in, including the option of staying overnight in the award winning TEA village guest house eco trail program.

Next morning after breakfast hosted by the toledo btia, the ferry takes them to New Haven Harbor where they can visit

the Salt Creek Wildlife Preserve operated by tide or take a boat to and up Monkey River with the monkey river tour guide association, or visit Wild Cane Cay to see the only Maya temple ruins found on a Cay. After lunch prepared by the people from Punta Negra the ferry takes them to Placentia village where they again have their choice of restaurants, hotels and entertainment, hosted by the Placentia BTIA and their tour guides, after breakfast the last morning of the tour they head out to the Sapodilla Cayes for a full day on the sandy beaches and swimming above the reef hosted by taste. The ferry arrives back in Puerto Barrios Sunday afternoon in time to catch the evening bus to Guatemala City in time to be back to work Monday morning if need be.

The second cruise ship program of the TPEP plan is for a larger passenger cruise ship of up to 700 to 800 passengers. They could come once or twice a week, offering the following four packages.

#1 Village tour, when 20 local buses Toledo bus drivers association take 20 tourist to 20 villages for one an a half hour village presentation and a half hour eco trail walk in the rain forest.

#2 The 6 day Eco Cultural Tour of Toledo. Where the six principal ethnic groups, Garifuna, Maya, Kriol, East Indian, Mestizo, Others, have designed a special presentation with music, dance, food, history, and a visit to a protected area Toledo taxi drivers association, can accommodate 30 visitors each.

#3 At the present time we have 10 licensed boats with toledo tour guides association tour guides, that can take up to eight visitors on a short fishing trip or river exploration.

#4 We have four private tour operators who can take 15 visitors each. For a total of 700 visitors:  
Village Tour and Eco Walk 400

Eco Culture Tour	6 X 30	180
10 Boats	X 6	60
4 Private Tour operators	15 X 4	60
		700

This leaves 100 visitors who may for one reason or another preferred staying aboard, or who may want to take an inexpensive walking tour of PG Town.

For those who stay on board we have a slide show, lectures, arts and crafts making lessons and other activities they can choose from.

Potential problems: While cruise ships that stay overnight can contribute to drugs and prostitution, research has shown that the increased drugs, prostitution and other crime that can come with uncontrolled cruise ship programs is not from the mostly older passengers, but from the crew which can number as high as 1 crew member to every 2 or 3 passengers, so a cruise ship with 600 passengers can have 200 plus members of the crew.

By restricting their shore leave, the potential crime can be greatly reduced, this with a well planned and supervised short 3 hour shore visit should be able to totally controlling these potential negative effects.

While environmental pollution due to

improper waste disposal is another valid concern, the International Maritime Organization estimates that up to two kilograms of waste per passenger is generated. The fact in Toledo District is that pilot projects for community recycling programs of our solid waste have indicated that our volume of recyclable products has been too low to make it economically profitable at this time. So contracting with the cruise ships to take some of their selected waste can actually help to make our community recycling projects a reality.

Another problem has been destruction of coral reefs by cruise ship anchors and the back wash generated by their big propellers. Again this may not be a problem for a small cruise ship visiting Punta Gorda because the Belize Barrier reef is 40 miles to the north east, and where the ship would be anchored are barren sand banks and the currents run down into the basin, the shore being many miles away. Passengers can be ferried from the ships to shore as they are now in Belize City.

While there are definitely other potential problems that must be considered and solved, limited space prevents us from addressing them all.



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# Fantasy Island

**By: Karla Heusner Vernon**

My husband and I spent part of the weekend at the cayes, enjoying the spontaneous escape and sense of adventure. As soon as we hit the Belize City harbor I knew we had made the right turn off the pothole ridden Northern Highway. If only scenic drive to town along the river was as pleasant as it used to be. . . . will it ever get better?

Sometimes I think the conditions of the roads are just a metaphor for the condition of our nation, the pieces eroding away representative of the erosion of power and control, the lack of funds for sustainable repairs like the state of our foreign debt servicing—both now in default.

But I drive these thoughts out of my mind as we drive. Or try to.

Instead, today I will just enjoy the patches of sunlight breaking through the clouds, the blues and greens of the water stretching out around us with its usual vibrancy. It feels and looks and smells the same as it did when I was a child heading out with my father and mother and sister.

Within minutes, our cares are behind us.

But within minutes, the reverie was disrupted. How could we keep from looking towards Stake Bank and Swallow's Caye and other areas that will be affected by tourism development if all goes according to the grand plan?

How different this whole area will be in a few years, perhaps even months. Even now stakes are in the water; it will only be a matter of time before construction begins.

How sad.

Not just for us, but for the tourists. Who among us is not nauseated by the Coney Island appearance of the Tourism Village from the harbor? Is this really the first impression we want to give visitors to our country?

What will they think when they are shuttled to Stake Bank on a causeway and cordoned off into an area of manmade beach? Perhaps hula girls will greet them with leis, bid them "Aloha" in the same inaccurate Disney landing they got when the village first opened and people dressed up like Indians were brought in to take photos with tourists. North American Indians, mind you. Not even Maya warlords or demure ladies in huipils.

Just more of the tacky souvenirs for them to take home with their coconut monkeys whittled out by Japanese artisans and African carvings of giraffes and elephants, pukashells from Indonesia and Bali-esque batik pattern sarongs and tequila shot glasses proudly proclaiming "Belize" manufactured in Taiwan. Oh, lest we forget the brilliantly colored hand woven textiles and sling bags made right here

in Guatemala.

Don't get me wrong, I know the brave few who venture outside the security of the village despite the dire shipboard warnings of muggings and rapes buy a Belikin or two and some Marie Sharp Pepper sauce. After they locate the bathroom at the Museum of Belize or Chon Saan Restaurant on North Front Street, enjoy the air conditioning at Mirab and buy a Crystal water from the vending machine out front.

Soon they will be able to see even more of the real Belize City as they stroll down the boardwalk, completely segregated from the post office and other diabolical tourist traps on North Front Street. Soon enough those

**"...I was driving down Regent Street in pouring rain, trying not to splash office workers in their uniforms when a young Caucasian lady tried to cross in front of me, half clad in a bright orange sarong, with a hibiscus in her hair sipping something out of a coconut with a straw!"**

unsightly sand lighters and fishing boats will be barred from the Swing Bridge area. Heaven forbid the tourists see men who make a living off the water.

I guess you can see by now I am not impressed with express line tourism where visitors are herded onto buses and cast down rivers in innertubes and allowed to walk along the reef and break bits of it off.

Even if they spent an average of \$200 US a day each, and paid \$50 each in head tax I would not be thrilled to have these head hunters trampling everything, sampling a smorgasbord of Belizean "culture," all-you-can-eat style. I want to yell at some of them, "Stay home if you want McDonald's!" But I don't.

Rather I pity them they will never get to taste panades, or walk up a set of wooden stairs in some rickety house, unpainted outside but lovingly filled with mementos inside, invited to sit at grandma or auntie's plastic covered table as she dishes out her homemade rice and beans and chicken and salad and tells Junie to turn the fan towards her guests. "Goodness but e only hot tidday!"

The chances of any cruise ship visitor getting a taste of authentic Belize is slim due to their hectic schedules and carefully crafted itineraries. Perhaps only those who sit for hours at the hair braiders get any chance to slow down. Probably most of them regret their decision 20 minutes into the inaction.

To those who do not join the snorkeling tours or inland "adventure" treks, but make the decision to knock around Belize City for a few hours, I wish I could apologize. To tell them we are sorry and ashamed our community is looking as it is, that believe it or not it did not always look this way. That we

wish we could rid them, and ourselves, of the crackheads following people around. That they should not be wary of the hard working tour guides and taxi drivers who have had their dignity stripped away by a system which keeps them outside the gates of the Village instead of providing them space inside it.

I want to tell them that we too are shocked and dismayed by how everything is falling apart. How certain streets depress us and the view from the Haulover Creek looks like portions of war ravaged countries and we don't know what to do about it.

Most of all I want to tell them that the money they might be spending is NOT

trickling down to the communities they visit, but being hoarded by a greedy few. Except perhaps the tips.

I'd also like to tell them they have been misinformed on shipboard if they have been told Belize City is an island, that there is a

beach, or that its okay to walk around town in your bathing suit, red skin and upper torso exposed, flip flops flopping. I wished for a camera the day I was driving down Regent Street in pouring rain, trying not to splash office workers in their uniforms when a young Caucasian lady tried to cross in front of me, half clad in a bright orange sarong, with a hibiscus in her hair sipping something out of a coconut with a straw!

It was such a remarkable contrast to the workaday world, ridiculous really. Poor flower child, she was totally out of her element out in the elements. I am sure she will stick to Maui next time.

Then again, maybe she had fun on Fantasy Island. Maybe she will be the first one to sign up for a return trip to Stake Bank. To eat buffalo wings and drink tequila and sing "If you like Pina Coladas, or getting caught in the rain. . ." to her boyfriend or husband as he swills Belikin and asks if he can buy some more to take back for his buddies. "And a few packs of those cigarettes too, what's in them things anyway?"

Who am I to rob them of their exotic holiday. After all, my hubby and I needed our own retreat from civilization too. Maybe Belizeans have more in common with the tourists than we'd like to think. Maybe in some ways, we need the break more than they do.

We can't turn them away, they have found us already.

But we should be able to ensure their fun doesn't come at our expense, or alter forever the things we love most about Belize.

## STOP THE MADNESS, END THE SADNESS

### Anti-domestic Violence Walk

To celebrate our 124<sup>th</sup> Foundation Day and the arrival of the Sisters of Mercy to Belize, Saint Catherine Academy, in conjunction with the Women's Department is holding an Anti-domestic Violence March on Friday, January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2007. The theme for this march is "STOP THE MADNESS, END THE SADNESS".

The day begins with a mass at 8:00A.M. at SCA grounds. The mass will be followed by presentations Dr. Carol Fonseca from the Women's Department and victims of domestic violence. Immediately after the presentations, the march will proceed through the principal streets of Belize City. The March ends at Constitution Park with a rally and musical presentations. Booths set up by various organizations that support the struggle of women in Belize will be on-site to offer information and services.

The walk leaves SCA at 10:30 am into Marine Parade, North Park St, North Front Street, Queen St, Daly St. Craig St, Barrack Rd. Freetown Rd., Douglas Jones, North Front St, Swing Bridge, Albert St., King St. Euphrates Ave, Cemetery Rd on to Constitution Park.

The public is invited to join us as we take a stand against violence and pray for God's mercy on Belize.

On Tuesday, oil traded near an 18-month low at \$55.64 a barrel in New York, down nearly 9 percent since the start of the year.

**source New York Times**

# Adjacency Zoning Issues

By: Trevor Vernon



A number of readers asked my thoughts on both Minister Godfrey Smith's column in the Belize Times, "Flashpoint," on Belize and Guatemala and the

recent related release from the Mexican Foreign Ministry on a soon to be signed Belize Mexico border treaty.

Both Mexico & Honduras were very helpful to Organization of American States' (OAS) negotiation process. That is to say: they acquiesced to creative mechanisms along their respective border with Belize in the form of the tri-national marine park in the south and the shifting of the marker at Aguas Turbias in the north.

To my mind it is clear that Pickstock Representative Smith is putting all hopes of any Guatemala settlement to rest at this point. That much is crystal clear. So, no more worries of attacks on gringo owned

resorts out west. No more expensive negotiations.

According to the Prime Minister's New Year's message, the focus now shifts to getting Guatemala to agree to go to the World Court. Presumably at the prodding of SICA (Central American Integration System), and other non-CARICOM countries.

Smith appears to disagree. Remember, he was a key player in the recent OAS sponsored negotiations, from its formal

of initiatives now. All that can be realistically expected from them is the trademark temper tantrums Belize plays in regional and international trade talks. It's not just matter of temperament; Minister Smith, an attorney by profession, also holds a masters in international relations from some high brow college in Boston, while his successor does not.

Smith believes the OAS negotiations and Ramphal-Reichler proposals were doomed from the outset because of the

There should have been only one facilitator in the Belize-Guatemala talks and it should have been Rigoberta. Why? Because in the ancient world all Maya along the corridor were related politically, and indeed the issues on the ground in today's "adjacency zone" are wholly Mayan issues: land ownership, health, education, cultural, political and economic integration.

But the Guatemalans were/are afraid of this leader and Belize probably backed off, trying not to infuriate the "rabbi-blancos" that control the Guatemalan political landscape. The nefarious Guat leader Rios Montt is known to consider all Maya to be lesser mortals ...and that's being kind to his bloody legacy. He has particular reason to be wary of Rigoberto; for she went on shortly after the talks started, to file charges against Rios Montt in Spain for crimes against humanity, holding him accountable for her own father's death. Too many ghosts in his closet.

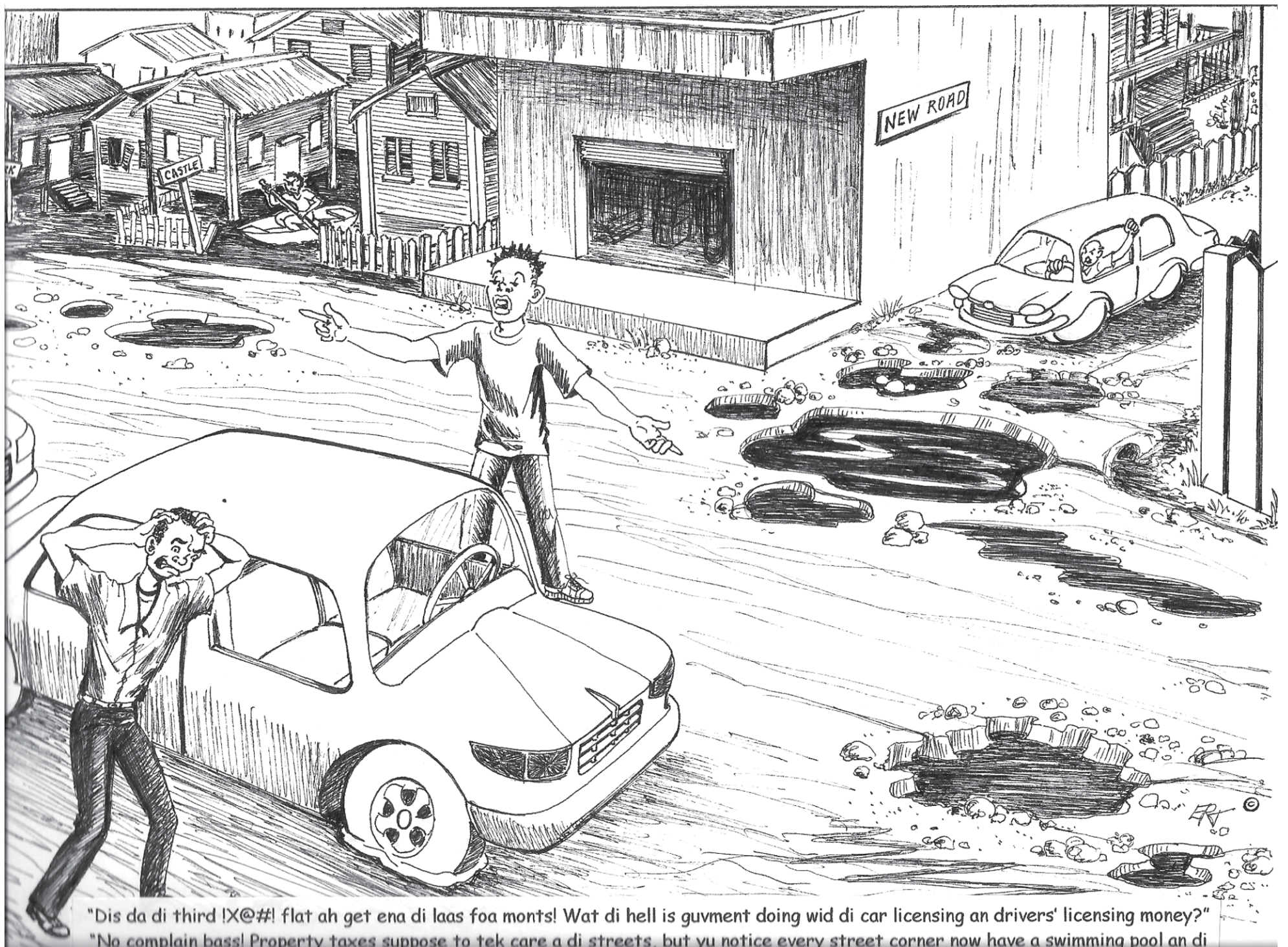
Having Reichler & Ramphal take on the roles instead distorted the issues, (Please Turn To Page 7)

**"...I have to give it to Godfrey, he is - in the words of Luke Espat - "a bright minister"."**

inception in June, 2000. For a good portion he was either Attorney General or Foreign Minister, playing a substantive role in the process. And, he oversaw the first rotating Belize Presidency of SICA.

Mr. Smith too, to my mind, is saying to everyone: don't expect much from our Foreign Ministry in terms

political situation in Guatemala at the time. I could further argue they failed because Lead Negotiator, aka Ambassador Thirteen, did not get Guatemala's Nobel peace prize winner Rigoberta Menchu Tum to play some buffer role as facilitator. The lady has serious "indigenous leader" credentials.



"Dis da di 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 an di

**Cartoon sponsored by Belize Medical Associates**

# Money Laundering in Belize

**By Justin Other Gringo**

(Continued from last week)

3. Best Money Laundering Bets--the same here as Laundromats from around the world. Give them your dirty money or launder it yourself.

**Land Developments** are wonderful. They *need* lots of money. "Buy low, sell high" sounds like a good idea, but the development costs are alarming. Roads, rain gutters, water lines, power lines, sewers (well, maybe not in Belize!) -- all of these take money. And the suppliers will take cash! (No tax trail.)

**Casinos.** Another wonderful place! "I want to buy some chips -- \$10,000 worth."

"Certainly, sir."

Later...

"Can I cash these in?"

"Certainly, sir." Spun dry!

Oklahoma is full of casinos, run by

the Native Americans on their reservations. I visited one. Where do all these customers come from? I wondered. Texas!! Texas has no casinos. It does have lots and lots of Meth Labs, however, out there on the plains where the nasty fumes won't bother anyone. What to do with the money? Visit Oklahoma, or Shreveport, Louisiana (five "Riverboat" casinos, just a few miles from Texas.)

**Cash Businesses.** In the US, "the mob" -- organized crime -- usually has a corner on vending machines, illegal slots (in private clubs) and juke boxes. Lots of coins. Take those to the bank.

"Where did all this money come from?"

"I have a vending machine business."

"Oh...OK."

## A new party

☞ (Continued From Page 1)

suffer the consequences. They had shown the "natives" how to suck the life blood out of their country, so now they could jolly well rape, pillage and plunder themselves. And with that example the results that followed were inevitable.

"The political system created and put into operation in Belize must make those old colonial Brit administrators smile in their graves. We now elect representatives who appoint one another as Ministers with the same uncontrolled power as their colonial predecessors; Ministers who circumvent the law whenever they wish; Ministers whose decisions are final and not reviewable, placing themselves above the law and above the constitution; Ministers who shuffle funds and properties for the benefit of themselves, relatives and favored ones, without fear of retaliation; Ministers controlling sensitive areas of our government without proper training or education; Ministers who borrow massive funds to cover losses from their corruption without constraints, burdening our future generations with overwhelming debts.

"Corruption? How could we expect anything else? And now that our political corruption has pillaged and plundered our national assets to where there is little of value left, we talk about a new party as if that is the answer that will cure the ills. NO, we don't need ANOTHER party, we need a BETTER party dedicated to correcting the abuses of our politicians. We need a BETTER party that will realign our political system so that it serves our people instead of our politicians. We need a BETTER party

that will search out and prosecute corruption. We need a BETTER party that will put power back in the hands of the people. We need a BETTER party that will make all of our elected officials accountable for their actions and punished for their infractions."

I told the Old One we are all trained or conditioned to think the same way. We only know what we know, and it seems to me that to make things better means we will have to learn a lot of things we don't already know. Does this mean that we have to continue to live with our political corruption until we get a lot smarter or better educated... sometime in the distant future? It is easy to say what we HAVE to do, but isn't our real problem HOW are we going to do it?

"Exactly," the Old One answered, "but the answers are all around us. Start looking for them."

But it doesn't have to be machines. Any business that deals in cash provides the same answer, even if it's only a hamburger stand, and it doesn't really matter if the business is actually showing a profit!

**New Businesses.** What a good use for dirty money! Start a new business. Use dirty money to buy all the equipment, or to fill the store with stock. The business may be slow to turn a profit, but if your investment dollar only cost you ten cents, you can afford to wait. And you're helping out young budding entrepreneurs.

**Private Banks.** Jeffery Robinson talks a lot about these in his book "The Laundry Men." In Belize, the Central Bank closely scrutinizes all of its banks, public and off-shore, but that's not so in many Caribbean countries. (Robinson has written a newer book called *The Sink* -- his name for the Caribbean basin!) If you want to open an account with a thousand or even ten thousand dollars, you will be closely examined. But if you have a million dollars, what bank would be crazy enough to turn you away? And banks have a wonderful device for spinning money dry. It's called a *wire transfer* -- a standard device in many John Grisham novels.

### Special Attractions of Belize

Jeffrey doesn't say much about Belize, even in his newest book, but there are lots of opportunities if you look around.

**Land.** Compared to other countries, Belize has a lot of wilderness. Warm wilderness. A friend of mine says "Belize as more undeveloped land than any place that's not freezing cold." At least half of it is protected, but there's still plenty available for development.

**Exports/Imports.** Containers going in and out. Lots of places for powder going out and money coming in. Authorities in the US are swamped, trying to inspect all of the incoming

shipments for nuclear devices. In Belize, they're just swamped. Drug sniffing dogs can find powder, but have you ever met a money sniffing dog?

**Customs for sale.** In his interesting book *Down By the River*, (Simon & Schuster, 2002) Charles Bowden tells about US Customs agents being paid one million dollars to overlook a hundred million dollar shipment of cocaine coming across the Texas border. It would take a lot less money to buy a Belizean agent. I personally watched an agent at the Belize City customs barn, going through a shipment of shoes to find a pair she liked. Imagine what would happen if she found a shoe box full of money!

"Why don't you just keep that box?" says the importer.

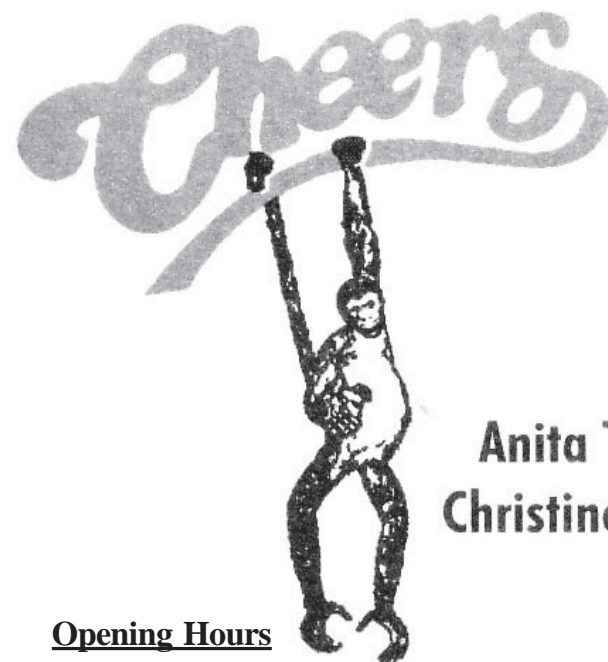
**Tourist Traffic.** Tourism is our most important industry. And most of the tourists look pretty affluent. Just like a money launderer. (Did you think they all look like "Super Fly?") They come and go in big groups. The cruise ships look wonderful -- all those 'hidey holes' and no time to search them all.

### 5. Conclusions

You'll have to draw your own conclusions. Just as in the US, there are plenty of things beneath the surface in Belize. Secret deals and two sets of books, and all of the devices we already know about from watching Godfather movies. So this is really just speculation on my part, and you're free to speculate on your own. Have fun. I do.

### About the Author

Justin Other Gringo came to Belize in the 90's from the U.S and lived here for many years.. He has been involved in various local and international enterprises, and has learned a lot about "How Things Work in Belize." He now lives in the U.S. You can email him at [justin\\_o\\_gringo@yahoo.com](mailto:justin_o_gringo@yahoo.com).



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# Independent will not be intimidated

By **Meb Cutlack**

A report to us from top PUP circles has revealed that the PUP has appointed a ‘special‘unit under a leading Cabinet Minister to -disrupt‘ The INdependent.

The plan, as described to us, calls for intimidation of our staff and business

contacts and advertisers and efforts to identify and put pressure on whoever they can find who is ‘backing‘ us. Well, our backers are few but far. They are loyal Belizens who want to see transparency, an end to corruption and a return to the democratic principles

promised by Independence.

They out of reach of PUP intimidation. Efforts to sink us will only result in a greater resolve on their part for us to continue our fight for reform.


From indications the UDP is also not happy about our appearance on the

scene. Neither of the two top retailers in the country, one PUP and the other firmly UDP, will handle The INdependent.

Meanwhile, the PUP continues to buy up our Newspapers as they hit the street. They have not had much success in the City and even less in the districts where our newspaper is rapidly becoming the top seller countrywide.

We will not be intimidated.

# Adjacency Zoning Issues

 (Continued From Page 5)

‘murkied’ the waters. Belize and Guatemala may just as well have appointed representatives of the KKK...

The latest round of talks was a total waste of time because it was poorly structured. Actually, it was the bastardization of a better proposal the usurping architect could not see properly. It was not his initiative, his brainchild. Try as he might he could never make it his own. Thirteen’s fixation was precisely what he told the Israeli reporter: he wanted to patent a successful negotiation process that could then be used in the Middle East.

Wrong focus, Dorian Grey. And, unapologetically I have and will always take issue with that end game...until the fowls have teeth. No one wants to say this but facts are stubborn things: The last Shoman/Musa attempts at a settlement were a massive disappointment and yet another very costly failure. The vision, whatever it is, is unclear to the rest of us. Surely it’s not a resolution of the border dispute. At least, not as Belizeans envision it with Guatemala there and Belize over here. Everyone’s territory intact.

And if Lady Rigoberta could not have been brought in because of lack of receptiveness in Guatemala then talks should NOT have commenced; forcing the ripeness was not conducive to anything other than massive complications that saw our border moved eastward, ridiculous adjacency zones established, millions of dollars withdrawn from the Belize treasury for First Class travel, accommodations.

Most of all, it created a white elephant on the OAS’ doorstep...and placed both Mexican and Honduran foreign policy machineries in compromising positions.

Having said all that, I think the only positives to come the OAS negotiations are:

- 1) confidence building measures (most were good) although we still have Santa Rosa...a hostile Guatemalan settlement in Belize.
- 2) big money sitting in accounts at the OAS in a Peace (or should we say ‘piece’) Fund for solving the political issue in the future
- 3) renewed interpersonal relations in both countries (including by Opposition members).

But all in all, I have to give it to Godfrey, he is—in the words of Luke Espat “a bright minister”. The initiative at the OAS is not only dead, it was stillborn. Now Mexico has to scramble to deal with the fallout and try to spin it positively. Honduras will be next.

So what’s next? Do we will have to wait until the old dinosaurs like The General and the Oxford trained scholar Kramer expire for ripeness to occur? Kramer has been looking ahead too, indoctrinating a whole new generation of political elites.

So there is no end in sight really, unless this thing is redefined within an indigenous peoples’ context. That just might fly since the rights of indigenous peoples is hot right now, both in Washington and at the United Nations. Not to mention with the citizenry of the US and Great Britain, even all of Europe. Collective white guilt may find that \$100 Million Guatemala wants as

compensation.

And just maybe when Lady Rigoberta takes the Guatemalan Presidency, we’ll have better luck nailing down a final settlement.

In the meantime, Minister Smith might consider another proposal to resolve both issues: if the squabbling between the Belize big money boys and the cruise companies

is indeed at an impasse, why not propose Guatemala big money interests take the cruise port? For Guatemala, it would solve the Guatemalan cart road problem and their desire for access to the cayes. For Belize southern portions of the country (including indigenous communities) would benefit and Belize City residents wouldn’t have to worry about those pesky potholes and paltry head tax anymore and it wouldn’t take any skin off the nose of the border-dwelling Mayan Communities.

## KHMH & UHS:Amalgamation or Damnation Nurses, where will you be after Jan. 15th, 2007?

The Ministry of Health has put forward a concept to amalgamate the KHMH (public) & UHS (private) and the MOH has established a Task Force to review the institutions’ services with a mandate to submit a report with recommendations by January 15th, 2007. Your professional organization, the NAB, has been monitoring the situation and has the support of other unions and associations on the position it has taken. The NAB continues to make recommendations that will positively impact nurses and the health care delivery system.

- The NAB continues to stand strongly by its position of**
- NO amalgamation without professional consultation!**
- NO amalgamation without sensitization of patient care delivery!**
- NO amalgamation without revision of KHMH Act!**
- NO amalgamation without job security!**
- NO amalgamation without salary negotiation!**

### Actions Taken to date

- 1.) Establish an NAB Task Force (representative from KHMH/UHS nurses)
- 2.) Requested the MOH to have representation on the its Task Force—Mrs. L. Longworth
- 3.) Conducted a KHMH 18 hrs poll (responses were **89 NO / 2 YES/ 2** spoiled)
- 4.) Press Conference
- 5.) Review and compilation of various reference documents - KHMH Act, KHMH & UHS Amalgamation Proposals, Cabinet press release on the issue, etc

Your input in the consultation has proven vital to the process as we stand as professionals to safe guard the quality of care we deliver to our clients. In addition we stand together in solidarity to safe guard our socioeconomic welfare and working condition. Please be informed that the Caribbean Nurses Organization (CNO) and the International Council of Nurses (ICN) have been informed of the situation.

Let us continue to implore each other to aggressively keep abreast of the issues which impacts us as professionals and our clients!

E-mail: [nab.nursesassociationofbelize@gmail.com](mailto:nab.nursesassociationofbelize@gmail.com)

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# TOPICAL TIDBITS

## When friends fall out!



It is quite a unique and fascinating sight as the bully boys of the PUP fall out and go for each others throats in such a public manner. It is obviously no holds barred between Luke Espot (reportedly backed by Michael Ashcroft) goes head to head with Michael Feinstein (backed by Tourism Minister Godfrey Smith). According to Smith, who backs Feinstein's Stake Bank proposal: "For Stake Bank to be feasible it must be designated as a port to be able to collect taxes to repay its loan." But, Luke Espot is equally adamant that Belize Ports Limited has a contract with the government which prevents GOB from issuing "any other commercial port licences in Belize without giving BPL the right of first refusal." Of course, both Stake Bank and BPL have been very carelesss (if not to

say carefree) about envrionmental law as it relates to both their projects. Perhaps both Lord Ashcroft and Godfrey Smith and their champions, Luke Espot and Mike Feinstein, should take a lesson from the Spanish Lookout oil disaster (see below) and think about actually complying with environmental law BEFORE proceeding with their mega projects.

### Spanish Lookout Oil Spill

There is plenty of blame to be shared by all in the spray of oil over the village of Spanish Lookout. For more than a year the oil company BNE has ignored Department of Environment instructions to submit an Environmenal Impact Assessment. For this same amount of time the Department Environment has made threatening noises but little else. Well, the real blame lies with the PUP government's laissez-faire attitude towards all environmental laws, placing themselves and their

cronies above all law.

### Our Roads!

They are now such a disgrace nationwide that it is going to need millions of dollars to make them even half roadworthy. This spendthrift (ie. he who spends money prodigally and who is extravagant and recklessly wasteful) government has nil when it comes to funds to fill any of the pot holes. The Public Works Department depots coutrywide look like abandoned equipment yards, their staffs are underpaid and their ability to repair roads reduced to trucks of sand and gravel and a couple of men with shovels. Even where they do pave is up and gone within days.

### BTL's reputation at zero!

A financial journalist visiting Belize on a cruise ship commented on the new 'cell' phone service available on board: "About the only complexity in thecellular at sea system is that it switches itself

offwhen the ship arrives at port, putting you at the mercy of local carriers such as Belize Telecommunications Ltd. (BTL). That outfit has a virtual monopoly in that country.

I figured BTL is not necessarily someone I wanted to trust with billing information, so I stuck with the on-board cellphone service."

### Troubled youths scam?

The INdependent wants to recruit vouths to work and sell paper the newspaper in Belize City. The newspaper will pay the highest sales comissions in town (50 cents a copy) to the youths. The newspaper has tried to find the so called 'troubled youth programs' but been unsuccessful. Maybe these programs don't actually exist and are no more than another PUP scam which sucks money from abroad.



## INdependent ECO-WATCH



### Litigation Fund, Ara Macao Resort and Development

The Peninsula Citizens for Sustainable Development (PCSD) is seeking to raise BZ\$15,000 as the remainder of funds needed to challenge government approval of the Ara Macao Resort and Marina proposed for the northern end of the Placencia Peninsula.

Most of the funds necessary to launch a judicial review of the development were raised locally by PCSD in the last two weeks of December 2006 in a fundraising effort that began on 13 December 2006 after PCSD met with a team of international and local attorneys about the Ara Macao review and approval process.

The Belize Department of the Environment (DOE) began circulating a draft Environmental Compliance Plan (ECP) for the project for review by the National Environmental Advisory Committee in mid-December 2006. Execution of the ECP by DOE and the Ara Macao developer is necessary for formal approval of the proposed development, and DOE representatives have stated that the ECP will be signed shortly.

However, DOE representatives have refused to provide any additional information about the status of the ECP.

Donations to the Ara Macao litigation fund may be made anonymously by depositing funds into the PCSD account at Atlantic Bank, account number 100158838. Donations may also be made by check payable to the Peninsula Citizens for Sustainable Development, General Delivery, Placencia, Belize. Donors who make donations by check may also request anonymity.

Please contact the Peninsula Citizens for Sustainable Development at

[info@placenciadocuments.info](mailto:info@placenciadocuments.info) for further information.

The Peninsula Citizens for Sustainable Development is a grass roots community organization of Peninsula volunteers concerned with the rapid, and often poorly planned and executed, development of the Peninsula. PCSD seeks to bring information about proposed developments to Peninsula residents to ensure that all developments are environmentally sustainable with respect to the fragile eco-systems of the Peninsula and its communities and cultures.

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# Home stays sweetened with chocolate

## Andrew Purvis in Belize discovers ancient sites and a modern heartland

*UK Telegraph*  
*Last Updated: 12:01am GMT 06/01/2007*

Cho, Choc, Choco... in the Toledo district of southern Belize, even the local surnames carry echoes of the region's most important crop: cocoa. Cyrila Cho has invited me to her home in San Felipe to see how brigadeiros (chocolate sweets) are made.

First, Cyrila roasts the beans, which she grows and ferments herself, on a comal - a circular iron hotplate over a wood fire. After grinding the cocoa by hand, she adds condensed milk, allspice, ground black pepper and tzibik - wild vanilla. When the mixture cools, Cyrila rolls it into large balls, and from these she fashions smaller ones the size of truffle chocolates. "We sell them to local hotels," her daughter, Anna-Marie, explains, "and to holidaymakers touring the villages."

By "the villages", she means the Maya settlements - about 30 in all, radiating out from the tiny regional capital of Punta Gorda and extending high into the Maya Mountains. While Lamanai and Altun Ha (in the north of Belize) and Caracol (in the west) are the places to go for ancient ruins, Toledo is the heartland of the living Maya. Comprising two thirds of the population, they are conspicuous by their squat physiques and broad, Maori-like features - shared with other descendants of the ancient Maya, from the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico to Honduras. In Punta Gorda, they have set up their own radio station broadcasting in Kekchi - the language of the modern Maya - via the old Voice of America radio mast. Its flashing red light blinks eerily above the town, and there are other signs of Punta Gorda's proximity to the United States. Members of the Peace Corps - the US equivalent of Voluntary Service Overseas - cycle by, and there seem to be more young Americans working for NGOs than there are locals.

Inside her kitchen - a shack with a gas cooker and a single low-energy light bulb - I notice Cyrila Cho's distinctive Amerindian features. Her language is guttural and unfamiliar and she speaks little Spanish, nor does she display any of the Hispanic traits so common in Central American people.

"Cho, Choc and Choco are Maya names," she explains, using Anna-Marie as interpreter. I realise I am looking at a living, breathing, modern-day Maya Indian - complete with the traditional Mayan flair for making brigadeiros.

Spiced chocolate, it transpires, is nothing new in Toledo. Kuku, the drink of the ancient Maya, was flavoured with black pepper, chilli and spices and sweetened with forest honey. Next day,

we sample a version of it in Dolores, a remote village near the Guatemala border, where we have lunch with Sebastian Putul and his family. In their smoky hut, festooned with hammocks and drying clothes, we sit on the floor and slurp the sweet nectar from plastic bowls. Then we are treated to caldo (spicy soup) and tortillas made from black corn harvested that morning, cooked with ground limestone or crushed snail shells to counter the effects of thiamine deficiency. Sebastian and his family eat paca (pronounced pay-kah), or gibbon, a wild rodent considered as much of a delicacy as hickatee (river turtle).

Such experiences can be had through the Toledo Ecotourism Association (TEA), which arranges stays at guesthouses in eight Maya villages. Outwardly, the tourist lodgings are indistinguishable from the rest - long huts with plank walls and thatched roofs - but have showers, toilets, bunks and bedding. Meals are taken with different families in rotation, to spread the income fairly.

On the road from Dolores back to Punta Gorda, we pass settlements called Otoxha, Corazon Creek, Santa Teresa and Jordan. Each comprises a dozen or so clean, tidy huts scattered across an emerald clearing where boys play soccer (not American football) and smaller children run exuberantly in the sunshine among the cats, dogs, hens and ginger pigs. Watching the smoke rise from the chimneys and catching the smell of tortillas on the griddle, it's easy to romanticise the Maya way of life - but these are among the poorest, most oppressed and least socially integrated people in Central America.

Only in Belize (in general) and Toledo (in particular) have they gained a new dignity and a unified voice through the Punta Gorda radio station, the TEA and the Fairtrade project run since 1994 by Green & Black's, the chocolate brand, which buys up every single organic cocoa bean in the district. It helps, as well, that Belize is more culturally tolerant and diverse than other Central American countries, thanks to the Maya resistance to Spanish occupation. In the conquistadores' absence, British pirates, loggers (the Baymen) and African slaves from Nicaragua found opportunity in Belize and pragmatically co-existed.

On the drive to dinner, we pass the most bizarre tribute of all to Belize's ethnic diversity. A woman walks by the road, wearing a winter frock and a bonnet like something out of a Dutch old-master painting; her son has blonde locks tumbling from beneath a straw hat and is dressed in denim overalls.

"It's a Mennonite family," says our



*Toledo is the heartland of the living Maya, comprising two thirds of the population,*

driver, explaining that these hard-working farmers are the descendants of an Anabaptist group founded in the Netherlands in the 16th century. The most traditional among them reject mechanisation and technology (riding in horse-drawn buggies, like the Amish) and speak Low German, while the more progressive speak English and have no qualms about using tractors, pick-up trucks and bicycles.

As darkness falls, we dine on the candle-lit veranda at Hickatee Cottages - a complex of Caribbean-style cabanas set among nature trails, with a butterfly house, an orchid tunnel, a pineapple patch and vegetable plots where the English owners, Ian and Kate Morton, grow produce for their restaurant. Pumpkin soup is followed by a salad of citrus and jicama (a legume also known as Mexican turnip), then a choice of coconut shrimp, chicken parcels stuffed with calaloo (like spinach) or catch of the day - snook, landed that morning, brought fresh to Hickatee by bicycle and pan-fried with butter, lime and garlic.

It's a standard of cuisine repeated at The Lodge at Big Falls, which combines simple accommodation with

birdwatching. Some 490 species have been spotted in Toledo, half of them in the grounds of the lodge. In the surrounding jungle, snakes, paca and kinkajou (nightwalkers), members of the racoon family, are common.

By the swimming pool at the Coral House Inn, tastefully appointed with local wood carvings and terracotta floor tiles, I sip a Belikin beer and read about the scuba diving at Sapodilla Cayes. Encounters with manatees, the gentle mammals also known as sea cows, are likely - but today the sea is too rough.

Two days later, the weather lifts and our Cessna soars out over the cayes into clear blue skies and blinding sunlight. Below, in the improbably clear water, we can make out the tiny shadows of manatees grazing on sea grass. "We'll have to come back," I say - but already the orange groves and vast industrial shrimp farms of central Belize are unfurling below us, bringing us sharply back to the modern world. Toledo seems like another country.

Source: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/main.jhtml?xml=/travel/2007/01/06/etmayamodern06.xml>

# Visit The Belize Zoo

## The Best Little Zoo In The World

# Criticizing or Correcting?

By the Rev'd Canon LeRoy Flowers

As a child of God, each of us is called to evaluate things...unfortunately for most of us....including myself, it is not an easy task. We have this inner compulsion to jump in and correct everyone who's not doing something "right" (the way I do it or see it). This is not always the most effective way as Christians. We can be very destructive and thoughtlessly criticize someone's message or action. Sometimes we do this just to show up our opponent.

Yes, there are times when all of us can benefit from our correction. For example, correcting a statement that is clearly contrary to Scripture or totally untrue, or a government policy that hurts the nation on a whole. We're called to hold each other accountable for Christ-like actions and biblical teachings. But when we do, the **way** we approach the issue is as important as what we say. If God leads us to challenge or deal with a problem, the question is: How to do so effectively and responsibly?

- (a) Get the facts first: Too many of us draw conclusion and rush to judgment based on erroneous assumptions. Make an effort to inquire and ask the relevant questions. Do not allow prejudice, class, race, status, politics, or religion be the decisive factor.
- (b) Don't confront in anger. Work through your anger before the Lord, not in scathing letters in the media or on the radio. Sarcasm may make you feel clever— but it is never constructive. Hang on to that letter or e-mail for at least 24 hrs – a week is better – before you send it. *"The anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God."* (Jas. 1:20)
- (c) Stick to the issue. Talk about what the person did or said that is of concern. Do not question his character or assume you know his/her motives. Implying that someone is not walking with God and is dishonest is deeply hurtful and uncharitable. Without facts or evidence you are becoming judge and jury all in one. Not healthy! Besides,

it's very difficult for a person whose character has just been attacked to willingly receive your comments.

- (d) Be Objective. Too many of us allow emotions and past failures to guide our current discussion with opponents. Too many are guided by prejudice.
- (e) Be part of the solution. What solution do you advocate for the problem? I believe that we should have at least one solution to offer every problem we confront.
- (f) Speak respectfully. To help keep what you say in the right spirit, ask yourself:
  - \* Is my primary motive to help this person?
  - \* Do my comments reflect love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control? (Gal 5:22 – 23).
  - \* Am I giving the person the benefit of the doubt?
  - \* Have I affirmed or praised the person for what he/she's doing right?
  - \* Learn to listen with your heart, to what your opponent is saying.
  - \* Am I confronting in humility and respect rather than being superior?
  - \* Will the effect of my words and actions be to tear down, or to build up?
  - \* If I had made the same mistake, how would I want someone to approach me about it? (Matt. 7:12)
- (g) Do Speak. Most leaders want to hear from people who are unhappy about something they're doing. They prefer dealing with problems directly and openly. Often talking to them is best. But it should be done respectfully. Letters can be misinterpreted, and a meeting can clear up issues more quickly. "The more deeply felt the issue, the more important it is to meet face to face."

It is a holy responsibility to correct and admonish one another in Christ. Even if what we say is right, words offered in the wrong spirit can do more harm than good. Jesus said, *"First take the plank*

*out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye?"* (Matt 7: 3-5)

Before we correct someone, we need to examine our own lives for "planks" like pride, a demanding, demeaning spirit, lack of love and, failure to forgive. With such planks

in place, we are set to criticize and destroy. We are the only correct ones! Such an attitude is not conducive to building fellowship and relationships. It is certainly not healthy in nation building.

Deal effectively with the issues in an objective manner so we can truly join in correcting each other, not destroy, nor tear each other down. "Praise God from who all blessings flow!"

Let us all seek to build a better Belize for the greater good.

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# New Executive Director for TIDE

*Punta Gorda Town January 8, 2007*

As the Toledo Institute for Development & Environment (TIDE) prepares to enter its tenth year of conservation work in Belize, it bids farewell to the founder of the award winning organization, Wil Maheia, and welcomes Celia Mahung, former Campus Administrator and Lecturer of the University of Belize, Toledo Campus, as its new Executive Director.

Outgoing Executive Director, Wil Maheia, has stepped down as Executive Director of the leading Non-Government Organization in the Toledo District to undertake personal endeavors of leadership. In his final staff meeting Mr. Maheia told the TIDE staff that he is confident that Ms. Mahung will take TIDE to another level of distinction in its conservation efforts.

As an active member of TIDE's Board of Directors, Ms. Mahung has been extremely instrumental in the growth and success of the organization since its inception in 1997. She has represented TIDE at international meetings on



*TIDE employees: (from left to right) Mario Muschamp-PCNP manager, Darius Avila-Accounting Consultant, Stephen Supal-Office Manager, Celia Mahung-Executive Director, Jonathan Labozzeta-Development Director, Wil Galvez—Program Manager.*

sustainable development and has participated in fund-raising seminars as well as several leadership training sessions for TIDE's Board of Directors. For the past three years, she represented the University of Belize, Toledo Campus on the Port of Honduras Marine Reserve Advisory Committee.

Ms. Mahung knows and understands her country, her community, and TIDE, which she

has promoted locally and internationally over the last decade. She is committed to the long-term sustainability of the natural resources of Toledo, and committed to the continued growth of the organization. Her particular strengths lie in her passion for the development of the Toledo District, leadership experience, capacity building expertise, vast knowledge of local and national people and customs, and her familiarity with

TIDE's conservation efforts. She is enthusiastic and highly motivated to protect and help develop the Toledo District.

TIDE is committed in its efforts to promote sustainable development of the Toledo District by fostering efficient and effective management of the region's resources, conducting relevant research and by promoting training and advocacy in order to preserve our natural heritage for present and future generations.

## Jungle Walk

*Curassow –taken from the book “Jungle Walk” with permission of the author Katie Stevens*

Mr. & Mrs. Curassow (*Crax rubra*) are a most distinguished looking couple. They are as large as a hen turkey but more elegant, with trim figures and sophisticated plumage. The male is formally attired in a black suit with a glossy but discreet green bib and spotlessly white pantaloons. His grooming is impeccable, each forward curl of his crest in fastidious place, while over his beak he sports a large, bright yellow knob known in bird circles as a caruncle. His lady wife has two outfits, one brown, the other reddish (*rubra*), but her head and neck are always striated black and white and her black crest is white-lace.

Curassows are related to the guan family and also-dare it be mentioned-to those rowdy, dowdy chachalacas from the other side of the tree.

The curassow spends much of its life stalking about the forest floor,



dining on what it finds there: appetizer of tree seeds, a large beetle as an entre, perhaps a fallen mango for dessert. However, with the help of its mate, it builds its nest in a tree, usually at about

ten meters up.

Once a liaison is formed, neither Mr. or Mrs. C would even think of philandering. The male is the dominant spouse, leading his family about and warning of danger with a high-pitched whistle. He also has a unique song, very low-pitched but far-flung, which consists of a series of patterned notes. The pair mutter together about domestic matters.

Two fluffy chicks are hatched from rough-shelled white eggs. They prefer to clamber about in shrubs and other dense vegetation rather than to join their parents on the ground, but at the end of the day they flap their way to their mother's roost and snuggle in for the night, one under each wing.

The future of these birds is linked to the continued existence of tropical forests from eastern Mexico through Central America into Colombia and Ecuador-and to the food fads of people of these regions.

## Curassow

# Private Listing

## Lake Gardens, Ladyville

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# Belize oil fiasco

 (Continued From Page 1)  
 who was parked in the FTC parking lot?"\n
 "Oh, yes."

"Could you tell me how, exactly," I pushed?

“Well, we have a lot more dead chickens now. I know at least two cows have died. Stinking flares burn all night covering our houses and fields with slimy soot and never allow the night to be dark enough for sleeping any more. Our children complain of belly aches. Many of us now have breathing problems and some of our families had to move to get better air. The noise is constant. Oil trucks are pounding our roads to potholes. A lot of very rude people are running around telling our people we have to do what they say because they own the oil and they can come on our property whenever they want to. And did you see Channel Five? The oil company just had a spill which they tried to cover up, even though it contaminated our water reservoir and pastures. Our oil consultant warned us and I guess we should have listened to him.”

“Who is the consultant?”

“Don’t know his name, Jim something, but he has been right on with everything he has told us. Allen Reimer is in charge of our oil committee and he knows what’s going on. Try him.”

Unfortunately Allen Reimer was in a meeting. I stopped to get gas at the Esso station, and asked one of the men there what they thought about the oil production.

“Just had a bad spill from the Usher 2 that came all the way up here. See there on that tractor, those oil spots. You can follow them all the way back to the well, a half mile away. Those oil people don’t seem to care much, but our reservoir is contaminated now too. Don’t know if it will make the chickens and cattle sick ‘cause they have to drink that water. That BNE oil woman was telling us a while back that we didn’t have to worry once oil production started because there wouldn’t be any problems then, just during drilling. Our consultant said he didn’t want to say she was lying, but if she wasn’t lying she was plumb ignorant. Looks like he was right.”

“Who is your consultant,” I tried again.  
“Don’t know his name. It is Jin something. White hair, white beard and he’s at full market weight,” he laughed.  
“Just saw him a little while ago checking some soil pasture grasses for oil kill. He’s got some age on him, but he sure gets around.”

It wouldn't be right to pass Western Dairy without stopping in for ice cream. I found a couple of older Mennonite men there who were enjoying an ice cream cone and asked if they thought the oil was a good thing?

“Must be good for some people, but they don’t live in Spanish Lookout,” one of them responded.

I pointed out that I understood the Community got a lot of money from their

share of the oil royalties. Didn't they think that maybe in the long run the money they were getting would be beneficial for Spanish Lookout?

“Money we are getting? That oil company has paid for some of the damage they have done, but after two years of them stomping our crops, invading our barns and peeking in our windows, the Community has never received a penny of royalties from the oil production. And it doesn’t look like we are going to either, ‘cause the government is supposed to collect the money first and then pay us. I expect we will see eggs at a dollar an egg before we will see the first dollar from the government!”

I commented that I was surprised because the law said the landowners were supposed to get 5% of the oil revenues or something like that.

“Doesn’t seem to matter what the law says because the government runs the law. But it is a lot less than 5%, and it don’t make any difference even if it were 50% ‘cause we aren’t getting any of it anyway. Talk with Allen Reimer or our consultant. They’ll know all about it.”

Decided to make one more stop at Midway Convenient Store where I found a Mennonite friend of mine talking about the oil pipeline that was being installed. I told him I saw where they were installing two pipes, a big and a little one, by the Thrift Shop, and I understood the pipeline was going to stop all of the problems they were having with the gas flares, and oil production.

“What you see is not really what you have with that pipeline,” my friend commented. Our consultant was really against the installation, because that smaller pipe isn’t an oil pipeline at all, it’s a high voltage 25kva electrical cable. According to our consultant laying a 25 thousand volt electric line on top of, and in the same trench as, a pipeline carrying a high volume of explosive oil is creating a future disaster just waiting to happen. The first time a backhoe accidentally breaks through that trench there will be an explosion that will kill anybody nearby.

“When the oil people started talking about a pipeline, a lot of us were concerned because it would cross property that we were planning to build houses on. BNE people told us not to worry that as soon as they put the pipeline in we could go ahead and build over it. It was a common practice everywhere. Our consultant said the BNE people were

either lying or just plain ignorant. He arranged a trip and took the oil committee to the States and Trinidad so they could see the problems with pipelines, and they found that nobody builds over any oil pipeline. In fact it was against the law in other countries. BNE then said we must have misunderstood what they said, but we didn't.

“Our consultant asked for an engineering report on the pipeline but BNE refused to give it, or maybe they didn’t have one, so he asked for the engineering data so he could evaluate it himself, but BNE refused to give it. He asked for information on leak detection and safety devices, but BNE just didn’t answer. I understand that the Environment people at DOE also asked for it, but Ministers ignore the laws when they want to, so nothing more was done and BNE acts like nobody asked them for anything.”

“Who’s your consultant,” I asked?  
 “Man’s name is Jim and his card’s over there on the wall. You should go look him up.”

I guess Consultant Jim is my next stop.  
Tell you next week what he has to say.

**Comments? Suggestions?  
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**ARIES**  
(Mar. 21- April 20)  
Travel should be on your mind. Your charm will attract members of the opposite sex. Make sure that you get legal matters checked out thoroughly. You can get good solid advice from relatives or close friends you trust.

**TAURUS**  
(Apr. 21- may 21)  
Talk to someone you trust if you need advice about broaching the subject. This might not be a day for hasty decisions. You can make career changes that may put you in a much higher earning bracket. Find ways to make extra cash. Start making things or reusing rather than buying ready made.

**GEMINI**  
(May 22-June 21)  
This is a turning point. Talk to your mate about a vacation and discuss the expectations of your relationship. Take care of your own responsibilities before you help others. Friends may not be completely honest with you.

**CANCER**  
(June 22-July 22)  
You won't have to look for the action. Your emotional state could leave you vulnerable and confused. Get involved in jobs that require creative input. You can win points with both peers and superiors. Changes to your self image will be to your benefit as long as you don't over pay.

**LEO**  
(July 23-Aug 22)  
Try to be there for someone if they need assistance. Opportunities to meet new lovers will evolve through your interaction with groups or fundraising functions. Be willing to listen, but don't be fooled. You can make money if you're willing to push your ideas on those in a position to support your efforts.

**VIRGO**  
(Aug. 23 -Sept. 23)  
Mingle with those who can help you get ahead. Make amends if you can. Get into fitness programs to keep in shape. Your ambitious mood may not go over well with loved ones. Consider starting a small

business on the side. Look for a marketable gimmick.

**LIBRA**  
(Sept. 24 -Oct. 23)  
Reciprocate by offering helpful hints. You can set your goals and make a beeline for your target. You need an outlet. You must make sure that all your personal documents are in order.

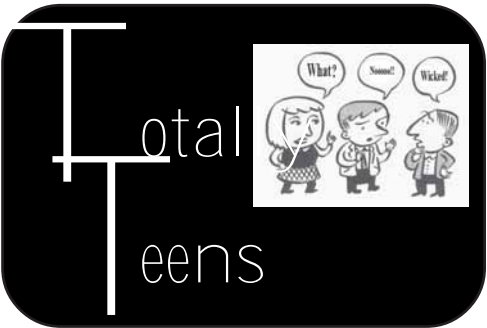
**SCORPIO**  
(Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)  
Channel your efforts into achieving your goals. Use your creative flair. A change in position could be better than you thought. Difficulties with your mate may lead to isolation.

**SAGITTARIUS**  
(Nov. 23 -Dec. 21)  
Don't let your emotional partner upset you this week. Someone you work with could try to undermine you. Try not to at tempt to do something unless you are fully intent on following through with the plans. Your lover may disappoint you in such a way that estrangement will follow.

**CAPRICORN**  
(Dec 22.- Jan. 20)  
If you are not already, think about going into business for yourself. Female colleagues may be able to help you get the job done. Your involvement in sports or entertainment will lead to new romances. Get back into the swing of things.

**AQUARIUS**  
(Jan. 21 -Feb. 19)  
You need some help this week. You can make personal changes that will enhance your reputation and give you greater self confidence. Your partner could also use some time alone with you. You will have original ideas for ways to make extra money.

**PISCES**  
(Feb. 20-Mar. 20)  
You can expect to feel confused about your personal prospects. Try not to judge too quickly. You can continue to forge ahead if you make a few long distance calls pertinent to closing pending deals. New interests are preoccupying your time.



## Mothers

*Mothers are sweet  
mothers are kind  
my mother should know  
I love her  
She loves me  
I think that's something we both can see that she is mine*

By Julia Heusner

\*\*\*\*\*

## Your dose of laughter



If you are between the ages of 11 and 18 and would like to express your opinions email us at:  
[independentnewspaper.bz@gmail.com](mailto:independentnewspaper.bz@gmail.com)

A teacher was giving a big test one day to his students. He handed out all of the tests and went back to his desk to wait. Once the test was over , the students all handed the tests back in. The teacher noticed that one of the students had attached a \$100 bill to his test with a note saying "A dollar per point." The next class the teacher handed the tests back out. This student got back his test and \$56 change.

## Hunt for good food

With Anthony Hunt



### Chateau Caribbean Restaurant, Marine Parade, Belize City.

*This former colonial era hospital where many of us were born, has been a fixture of the Fort George area for many years. While the restaurant was quiet, the food was hot and ample. We tried the Club Sandwich, Stewed Chicken and Tomato Shrimp dishes, with varying reviews. While the sandwich was very good the other dishes get outshined by previous reviewed establishments in this column. The service was decent and the view, great, but the prices were a bit out of the customary lunch budget for most. We do hear that the dinner service is much better attended. This is good news for a restaurant that has one of the best locations in town. Daily Specials, Breakfast, Lunch & Dinner, \$15 & up*

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# Social Page



Belikin Calender models Tiffany Jones and Shanna Pott. The calendar was launched on January 6, 2007 at the Riverside Tavern in Belize City



There were long lines at the calendar signing at the Tavern. (Photos by Richard Holder)

## PUBLIC & BANK HOLIDAYS 2007

It is notified for general information that public and bank holidays specified in the First and the Second Schedule to the Holidays Act, Chapter 289 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2000, will be observed on the following days during the year 2007 in accordance with Section 3 of the said Act:-

Day	Date	Occasion
Monday	January 1 <sup>st</sup>	New Year's Day
Monday	March 12 <sup>th</sup>	Baron Bliss Day (in lieu of Friday, March 9 <sup>th</sup> )
Friday	April 6 <sup>th</sup>	Good Friday
Saturday	April 7 <sup>th</sup>	Holy Saturday
Monday	April 9 <sup>th</sup>	Easter Monday
Tuesday	May 1 <sup>st</sup>	Labour Day
Monday	May 21 <sup>st</sup>	Sovereign's Day (in lieu of Thursday, May 24 <sup>th</sup> )
Monday	September 10 <sup>th</sup>	National Day
Thursday	September 21 <sup>st</sup>	Independence Day
Monday	October 15 <sup>th</sup>	Day of the Americas (in lieu of Friday, Oct 12 <sup>th</sup> )
Monday	November 19 <sup>th</sup>	Garifuna Settlement Day
Tuesday	December 25 <sup>th</sup>	Christmas Day
Wednesday	December 26 <sup>th</sup>	Boxing Day

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- Succotz:  
Hua Yong Store
- Benque Viejo Del Carmen:  
Long Lucky Super Store
- Dangriga:  
Oscar Ramirez
- Placencia:  
Noldan Brown
- Punta Gorda:  
Natures Way Guest House
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