

The Independent

Reformer for the People

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TROUBLES: Troy Testily Testifies

The testimony of Mr. Troy Gabb, Former CEO of the Development Finance Corporation (D.F.C.) commenced Monday, March 5, 2007 in the D.F.C. Commission hearing at the B.I.M. Building in Belize City. His former boss, Glen Godfrey is expected to take the oath later today and is expected to be accompanied by legal counsel as were Gabb and David Courtenay before him. The majority of witnesses, mostly employees and former employees, did not have the added security or luxury of having legal counsel to provide aid & comfort.

The hearing was aired live on at least three radio stations as public interest is quite high, supremely so. But we can expect no explosive testimony as the



Former D.F.C. CEO Troy Gabb testifies before the Commission of Inquiry.

witnesses today will be guided by legal counsel and there is nothing to suggest that Mr. Godfrey will be pointing to where the bodies are buried, despite his earlier public overtures to elements of the other mass party, the UDP.

While there has been constant reference to DFC legal advisor Gian Ghandi, there is no indication or testimony that he Ghandi directly participated in the fleecing of D.F.C. He simply gave legal advice, some of which were taken while others were not. Mr. Ghandi has served in various capacities in both the Musa & Esquivel government with seamless transitions.

Whether Queen's Council Gian Ghandi will be called to testify remains to be seen.

BCWU Strike Countdown fizzles

B.T.L. provision of Internet Service was abruptly interrupted on Monday, March 5, 2007 and when available it has been spotty.

The Union had issued an ultimatum three days earlier warning that mid-day on Monday would be the deadline for reemployment of all four B.T.L. employees terminated earlier, or else. As INdependent Weekly goes to press on Monday, we are monitoring the situation with the other services B.T.L. provides.

Many are claiming that Lord Michael Ashcroft is calling the shots at B.T.L. and has decided to flex his muscle again by firing chief Union Negotiator Christine Perriott, in the middle of negotiations.

It will be recalled that whilst the Honorable Chief Justice had numerous rulings ignored by Ashcroft-controlled B.T.L., that company has simply refused to comply with the rulings, leading to much speculation from the callers to the morning call shows that this company is above the law.

The legally recognized chairman (from a ruling by the Hon. Chief Justice himself), Jeffrey Prosser, has been trying every avenue to take back



B.C.W.U. leader Paul Perriot calls for a show of hands to support the union's position after BTL dismissed his wife, Christine Perriot last Tuesday.

what is legally his; but the Lord, with Musa's obvious blessing, has muscled Prosser out, literally.

Prosser's recent efforts may have triggered apparent suspicion in the Ashcroft camp that the Telecommunication Union leadership has been coluding with Prosser. Musa has to be worried about Prosser because Prosser's legal team has stated in a Florida mediation court that monies were paid out to Musa in excess of what government claims. The Musa

government has been adamantly telling the people that all they got from Prosser was a promissory note.

We have previously opined in this paper that the Lord is indeed the major force that wields tremendous influence over the executive and legislative branches of Government. Undue influence.

Therefore, Mrs. Perriott's extrajudicial termination is simply another manifestation of a highly compromised Musa government crippled by its love for money, at the expense of the rule of law. Mrs. Perriott has become the victim of political enrichment policy at B.T.L., a policy engineered by the Musa regime and apparently executed flawlessly and ironically by the former head of the Financial Intelligence Unit. Let's not forget B.T.L. has engaged in a massive money laundering scheme as documented in their 2005 annual report to shareholders.

The only solution lies in the Prime Minister's hands. He had better talk some sense into the Lord's head or head back to Whitehall to give him another tongue lashing. Let us see how much he loves this good country and its laws that have been so good to him.

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SHADY

Dear Editor,

I noticed during the past town board elections the propensity of politicians and political hopefuls to don ‘shades’, the black opaque type or, my favourite, the reflective type, while campaigning.

The ever stylish shade is being worn for more than just protection from the sun. They are most useful when you have something to hide, like those stoned red eyes, or if you want to avoid eye contact. They can help you ‘look cool’, or they can provide you some anonymity.

But what does it do for politicians and those hopefuls? It leaves them looking shady. Why can’t politicians, bureaucrats and other officials meet the public or press without their eyes being covered? What are you afraid of? Getting a little sun in your eyes? Can’t take the limelight? Afraid of being recognized? Afraid people will see your shifty eyes? Or that people may catch a look in your eyes and see the ‘real’ truth? That people will see you for who you really are? That you are trying to hide something? As politicians shouldn’t you want to connect with people? Show them they can trust you?

One of the most important things you can do when looking for support from people is to look them in the eyes when speaking to them, make eye contact when talking to a crowd. Connect with people using the sincerity and honesty that comes from your eyes....unless you don’t have either of those qualities, and in that case keep the shades on!

With elections once again loom-

ing upon us political hopefuls will be coming out in droves wanting to meet us, talk to us, and to ask us for our vote. And all the time they will be decked out in some faux designer pair of opaque shades, while spewing about ‘their vision’, the ‘clarity’ of issues, and where they ‘see’ the country going. Maybe they should try taking off their shades to get a good look of what is really going on. And we could then get a good look at them.

My first impression upon picking up the Feb 23 edition of *The INdependent* was “who is this guy? He looks like a thug!” Then I read he is the PNPs party leader, I thought, “I can’t trust someone who doesn’t have the decency to remove his shades while meeting with the public, how rude!”

And then I thought he looks like so many other guys with shades on. Maybe this is all being done on purpose. Maybe they really don’t want you to know who they are so if they lose, with the shades off they don’t have to hang their heads from a loss; but if they win, with the shades off they won’t look like the person you voted for, thereby letting them get away with what ever they want.

I challenge all those planning on running in the next election to expose themselves to us, the electorate. Let us look you in the eyes as you ask us for our vote. No shades, please!

It is “*Under the shade we flourish*”, not “*Using shades we flourish*”, so step out of the sun if you can’t take the heat.

Sherry Gibbs
San Ignacio

ESTAP deaf?!?

Dear Editor,

As I read more and more articles on the Toledo Eco-Park, I am tempted to write something I know about the concept. The eco-park plan consists of the ecotourism development and conservation of forests, caves, Mayan temples, waterfalls, sink holes and the (Maya and Garifuna) people along with their traditions and culture.

I can recall that in 1995-2003 TEA, PGCC and community leaders became very active and were enthusiastic to begin the implementation of the eco-park plan. But unfortunately, ESTAP never listened, nor even helped promote this concept of a park.

In 2003 a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by TIDE, PGCC, TEA, Peace Corps, TDC, Alcades Association, Village Council Association. These major organizations and important personnel signed because they believed that the eco-park plan is ready and worth a trial. During the last five years the TEA executive board was dormant, but now we have new officers that are eager to revive and disseminate more information concerning the Eco-Park.

As a Mayan from Toledo, it hurts me a lot to read reports from surveys conducted in Toledo which reveals that 1 out of 10 children is classified as suffering from mal-nutrition. Now after every workshop and meetings I attended, it is very clear to me that there are many financial support to fund viable projects. My question is “Why permanently keep Toledo in poverty?” It is time to make a change.

We suggest that the Government of Belize, NGO’s and funding agencies

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The Independent and Alternative Parties

By: Ray Auxillou

The new trend in the INDEPENDENT newspaper is encouraging. That they are serious about trying to achieve political reform I find beneficial for the future direction of Belize as a strong independent nation. The stronger the debate, the more successful the eventual results.

Since this is an election year and events to the next general election are rushing at us faster than water pouring over Clarissa Falls, I think the Independent newspaper should be lending organizational advice to the new budding political parties attempting to overthrow the entrenched two party system. However it works out, such furor and debate can only be for the betterment of the country down the line.

The entrenched two parties are already polluted by natural “greed and self interest” from elected representatives. It should be kept in mind by the Independent Newspaper that any third

parties will also become quickly polluted should they achieve elected office. It is only human nature at work! It is very important that new third parties have their philosophies and political reform manifestos printed in the newspaper for the public at large to debate and decide to whom they will vote. Most effective to my mind, is that besides political reform promises, a time limit of 120 days to achieve those reforms, if they get a landslide majority should be made.

The PUP did something like this nine years ago and then disappointed us all with sham charades of cosmetic reforms. The Referendum Act comes to mind. The Senate Reform is another disappointment as examples.

The new third parties should print and spell out in detail what they intend to reform and when, with a time limit, if elected to office. Without these things, I would vote for the old guard. Better the devil you know, than one you don’t.

Teaching them how to conduct a voting campaign and funding same are two different things. No sense having somebody run for the party who can’t pay bus fare to party meetings. Most WTP runners in the last election couldn’t even pay their own \$200 entry fee into the political arena. It is not unusual to see new elected representatives get swell headed and unable to handle the authority given to them by the voters.

Government by committee is not always effective either and budget positions, formulas for paying for national development are subjects that new aspirants in new parties are going to have to have workshops and study groups quickly, to bring third parties up to speed in time for the new election.

There is the matter of party and voting organization, with party block captains, getting out the vote chapters organized and making voting lists, monitors of new names being added to the roles as well as ballot box supervision

during the election. Certainly each new aspirant of any third party should know his electoral division voters intimately and it is too late to start a few months from now. It must be started right now to be effective.

Good coverage by the Independent which claims to be a rebel political reform newspaper can do much to help these newbies get organized in this political contest. Reporting on individuals aspiring for office and how prepared they are would stimulate activity from all parties.

Time is indeed running out very fast and these third parties need encouragement and assistance in organizational political campaign skills from now. It is not enough to throw the pirates out of office, you don’t want to end up with a new set of on the job political trainees learning the ropes as they go along, especially once the power of ministerial discretion takes hold.

Words but No Substance

By: Des Parrette

WOW! We have a whole litter of new alphabet clubs willing to stand up and challenge the deeply ingrained Blue and Red Party fascism, and although we have to admire the courage displayed, and their lofty goals, no one seems to have any real plans to get the jobs done. It’s sort of like a group shipwrecked on an isolated island trying to elect a king, with all the candidates promising to rescue them. How? Well, don’t know yet, but elect me king and then I will figure it out. Sorry, but that boat won’t float.

The People’s National Party (PNP) promises accountability in courts and government, and accountability is a key issue. Within 100 days PNP says it will collect all the monies stolen from the People. Now wouldn’t that be something? And the first thing they are going to do is clean up corruption. Holy Grouper! They are also going to make it easier for children to go to school, and focus on people needing jobs. Lofty and desperately needed goals, but Will Maheia, having shown some good leadership qualities over the years, may eventually devise the way to a rescue.

Vision Inspired by the People (VIP) has a full, detailed and reasonable platform published. VIP doesn’t really have a plan of action but they want to reduce corruption by adopting good administrative procedures and legal safeguards, elect honest and competent representatives; take some of the power away from the cabinet and give it to the legislature and courts; strengthen the Governor General’s Office; establish the public referendum; institute campaign


reforms; and generally build a bigger bureaucracy. This party has some good ideas... at least on paper... but there doesn’t seem to be clearly defined leadership. Paul Morgan carried the flag for the Mayor’s race in Belmopan, but now what....?

I have yet to see that We The People (WTP) has any real plan of action...but they are the only party that has proposed the Senate be an elected body. This is probably the most important innovation on any platform right now. Who is their leader right now? Is Francis Gegg still involved, or is the party lead by Hippolito Bautista? Enquiring voters want to know....

Cornelius Dueck’s National Reform Party (NRP) has a full slate of candidates and a few good goals, but like the rest of the parties it has no plan of attack. NRP is going to eliminate corruption (*join the crowd*), crime and poverty; and they promise better schools and hospitals. They don’t know how they are going to do it though. I am concerned however by the statement of their leader, “If Christians ran Belize there would be no corruption.” By the Prophet’s Beard and Buddha’s Belly! Christianity has the bloodiest history ever, filled with murder, corruption, treachery... you name it. And which Christianity are you talking about?

It seems there was also a Green Party wandering around PG for awhile, but it seems almost invisible already. That’s a real shame because Belize has some serious environmental issues that need attention.

So what do we have? Well for one thing we have a lot of voters who are

fed up and disgusted with the corruption and incompetence in government. Enough voters in fact, that if you put (Please Turn To Page 13) 



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Buds-get reading 2007



By: Karla Heusner Vernon

I am stretched out in the hammock listening to the reading of the budget at the House on the radio. No longer confined to the prim and proper behavior of the press box, I can suck my teeth, even shout at the speakers (on the console, not in the National Assembly) like the rest of the Belizean public.

Somehow the whole thing seems so utterly divorced from the reality real Belizeans face. The presentation is so dull, I feel rather sleepy....

"Madam Speaker I rise this morning to present what the Buddies-get for 2007-2008. Unfortunately the Prime Minister could not be here due to ah,

er, illness. Yes, I have the doctor paper right here, signed by the CEO, I mean a doctor.."

"Thank you, Minister of Money—we do appreciate your standing in for the leader of the nation this morning and we wish him a speedy recovery."

"Madam Speaker, I wish I had good news to share with this good country. But I do not. Basically Belize is broke and this exercise is just that, exercise. I have lost a good five pounds carrying these books and receipts around with

vehicles for the ministers and their drivers.

"But enough of the pleasantries. It says here that the Consumer Price Index rose by 4.3% and that all major commodity groups were affected especially Transport, Communications, Rent, Water, Fuel and Power. Madam Speaker, I admit this figure is slightly understated. It is probably more like a 43%, particularly for fuel. Bu we in government believe the consumers have brought this on themselves due to their

Basically Belize is broke and this exercise is just that, exercise.

me to the various Ministries trying to get some accounting of how they spent the money we did not give them last year, although they submitted detailed plans of proposals of the various projects and wage bills. The truth is simply we did not have the money we allocated for them because it had to be spent on international debt servicing, related fees and commissions and expense accounts,

mismanagement of their salaries and savings. And sheer laziness. Sorry to be so blunt.

"Why can't Belizeans take a couple of hours off each month to go to Miami, Panama, or Montevideo, or even Chetumal? They too could save on groceries and access duty free gas like those of us in government. Why do they insist on having flush toilets when out-

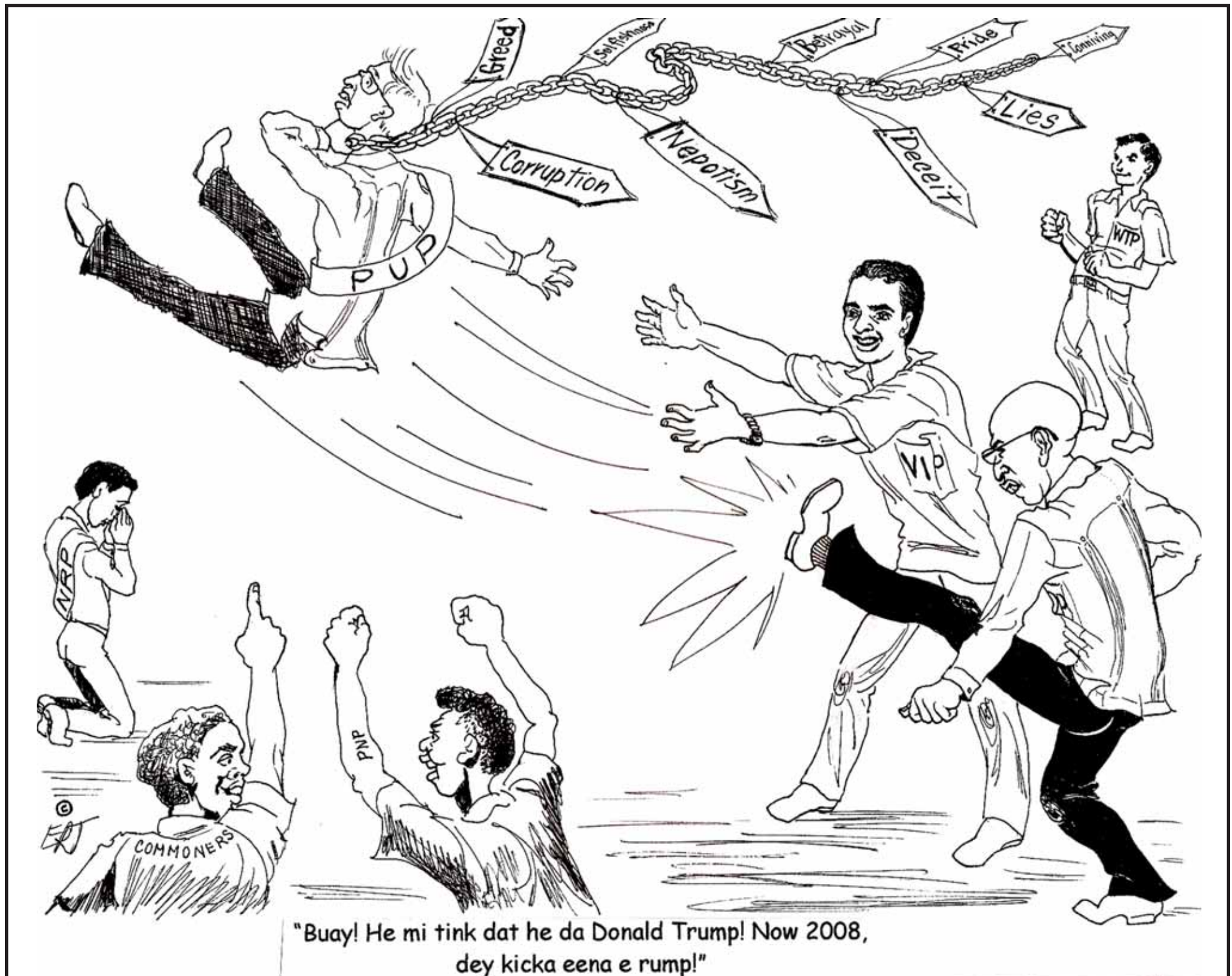
houses, even canals, were good enough for their grandparents and still are for thousands of people in the rural areas?

"It is this avaricious imitation of US lifestyles they see on television that is driving up the consumer index, Madam Speaker!

"Would you pay \$9.35 a gallon for premium fuel for an old gas hog some relative sent you from the States because they are trying to get rid of it? Of course not, you would do the sensible thing like we all do and sign a voucher for diesel and change your SUV every two years to keep it current and from being damaged by all those potholes being imposed on the Ministry of Works by all these trashy old cars!

Government is working so hard to try and make a better life for our friends and family, to acquire as much land and property as we can during this, our last term in office, but we are continually being asked for handouts to pay for luxuries like water, electricity, school books! Belizeans were historically a humble people, Madam Speaker, but now they want us Area Reps to pay for

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EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS: why we must take stock



By: Trevor Vernon

A Psychology professor of mine told me almost any discussion of race produces an “emotional trigger” in the audience. These emotional triggers are universal, affecting most people to some degree or another, no matter where they were born and raised, no matter what color(s) their parents are, or their own perception of their own skin color.

Too many of us allow others to drop phrases, turning our world upside down. We simply flip when they pull our triggers, cast aspersions on our class, our color, our children’s complexions, the texture and color of our hair...

The theory is, if you know what your triggers are and can control your reaction when someone tries to control you this way, you can better control your life, your destiny, your everything. In other words, knowing yourself is an indispensable defense whenever you are under attack, in any setting, including the political arena. Correction: Especially in the political arena.

Our leaders, both political and cultural, have gotten very good at making people feel bad about things their parents, grandparents, even ancient ancestors, did or decisions they made in some other time. Their ability to draw on an arsenal of collective feelings of guilt or inadequacy has given them a big negotiating advantage. Be aware of that.

Don’t let them rent space in your head.

Recently we have been hearing a lot of people saying they are being discriminated against because of their color. People call the radio stations and relate how they were at a certain restaurant, or shop or hotel and they felt they were treated like second class citizens. They believe tourists, or even Central American immigrants have more privileges than Creole, Black Belizeans do in their own country.

Ironically, often the incidents occur in restaurants and other public places where young migrant girls (who barely speak the Queen’s English) work as waitresses and/or shop assistants. This too is a super-sensitive issue between the groups of non-Spanish speaking Belizeans and non-English speaking

migrants who now just happen to have gotten a passport and voters card. Elections are fast approaching and the ruling politicians are alleged to be registering aliens left, right, and center. Huge powder keg. Beware.

Some of these incidents are unfortunate and probably more frequent that we care to admit. There are many insecure, racist people in this world. But I suggest to you perhaps Belize has not really changed for the worse, that historically, “race issues” typically get most inflamed WHENEVER and WHEREVER economic stagflation becomes the order of the day and the side effect of elections looming large.

Life in Belize today has become a major economic nightmare with sky-high prices on consumer goods and basic food stuffs, consumption taxes (10% GST) on the poor-- fuels (100%), utilities, runaway inflation, coupled with a mounting external debt brought on by unspeakable and despicable acts of blatant and shameless raping of the nations assets by the political gangs.

People, of all colors, are suffering. Badly. Worse of all, they feel helpless to change their own situation, feel victimized by “the powers that be.” Victimized— just as their ancestors were victimized— by those other “powers that were” way back when.

We must be careful and responsible enough not to allow the economic degradation of our country by the political establishment to push us into the realm of raw racial insensitivities, of uncontrolled emotions getting the better of our logic and reason. Of people getting so incensed by perceived slights and insults that they begin to react with mindless violence and with hate...like they tend to do in T&T and Guyana, for example.

Because this is precisely the reaction the politicians crave. Remember, most of them are cold, callous creatures that will most certainly push this country to the point of no return just to protect their ill-gotten gains and their dubious political power. We CANNOT allow this to happen. We must learn the lessons of history to ensure that we keep the political directorate in check to preserve our once tranquil haven of democracy...as well as to ensure the maintenance of the stable race relations and diversity that we all prize so much.

Each of us must look inward and identify our emotional triggers. We must acknowledge that certain issues, even words, not only make us uncomfortable, they make us angry. That we might say

and do hurtful things, in response to someone throwing words at us or implying we are less important than another group or individual.

If we are able to honestly say to ourselves: these are the things I will not allow anyone to try and bait me with, to distract me from the REAL problems of the day, we will not only sleep better, but be better Belizeans.

You simply cannot pre-judge people, expect them to present themselves in a certain way all the time, and spend your entire life waiting for the boot to drop. If you do this, you will never hear what that person really has to say because you may be so obsessed with the expectation of an emotional trigger you may well miss the beauty of a perfectly normal interaction with people who don’t look exactly like you do, or speak exactly like you, or share a same cultural value, but who have values that may

not be so different from yours.

This race issue is a big emotional trigger and a great many people, because they can’t handle it rationally, get turned off by any discussion of it or go to the radical extreme of playing it up... I believe we need to celebrate the diversity that is Belize while at the same time rationally and consciously identifying and controlling our emotional triggers, specifically as they relate to race. We need to focus on what has REALLY gone wrong in this country and fix it, instead of allowing ourselves to be sidetracked, or set on each other like wild animals for someone else’s political or financial gain.

We have the greater responsibility to guard against this because we have the greater vision for a better Belize. We obviously care, about Belize and each other. If we didn’t, we would have given up and left already.



UNITED NATIONS

The operations of the United Nations agencies resident in Belize (PAHO/WHO, UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, which are all organized in the United Nations Country Team) are guided by the Belize United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2007 – 2011 (<http://www.undg.org/content.cfm?id=331>) and cover the following thematic areas: Human Rights and Millennium Development Goals, Governance & Decentralization, Education, Child Protection, Health Systems & Services, Sexual & Reproductive Health, HIV and AIDS, Adolescent Mobilization and Development, Disaster Risk Reduction, Sustainable Natural Resources Management, Social Communication and Results-oriented Monitoring and Evaluation.

The UNCT wishes to establish a joint database for a more efficient and harmonized process of recruiting national consultants for the agencies’ programmes and projects in the above-mentioned thematic areas. The UNCT therefore is now inviting experienced and skilled national consultants, individuals as well as legally established firms, to submit the necessary information to be included in this database. Consultant firms are requested to submit the profile of each individual member of staff. The provided information should contain the following information fields: a) an up-to-date CV containing name, mailing address, telephone & email, legal status, education qualifications and relevant work experience; b) thematic area(s) of expertise, and; c) a listing of consultancy services & products, delivered over the past 4 years.

Information should be forwarded electronically to UNDP Belize at undp.bze@btl.net



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Rich Nations prodded on ‘Illegitimate’ Lending

By: Emad Mckay

Industrialised countries that knowingly lent billions of dollars in “irresponsible” debts to corrupt and dictatorial regimes in poor nations should cancel the debts and reconsider their harmful policies, a new study says.

The study by international anti-debt campaigners argues that some debts owed by developing countries should not be paid at all.

“This is because creditors bear a large part of the responsibility for having extended loans irresponsibly and negligently,” says the study, “Skeletons in the Cupboard - Illegitimate Debt Claims of the G7”.

The report says that the Group of Seven (G7) most industrialised nations — Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, Britain and the United States — lent money to regimes they knew to be corrupt or repressive in order to buy political allegiance.

The non-governmental organisations behind the report contend that the G7’s newfound emphasis on corruption, good governance and transparency lacks seriousness since those nations still refuse to apply the same principles to their previous economic practices.

“Creditors need to be held accountable for the bad decisions they have made and share responsibility for mistakes,” said Gail Hurley, of the international debt think tank EURODAD.

“It is not acceptable for the G7 to preach good governance to developing nations while at the same time collecting debts that were corruptly made,” Hurley said.

She was referring to politicians in industrialised nations who have recently put fighting graft high on their agendas, saying they want to make sure that taxpayers’ money is well-spent and not wasted by corrupt elites.

Other groups behind the report include the Italian group CRBM, Erlassjahr in Germany, PARC from Japan, Plate-forme Dette et Développement from France, the Jubilee Debt Campaign in Britain, Jubilee USA and Probe International in Canada.

Some of these loans, the report says, were designed to help rich country companies do business abroad and in many of these cases loans were provided at excessive interest rates.

“Development was never their original purpose,” says the report.

The study highlighted cases of unnecessary goods or services being sold, blatant overcharging, the sale of military hardware or weapons to authoritarian regimes which were widely known to

be corrupt or to abuse human rights, extortionate interest rates and projects with huge negative social and environmental impacts.

For example, the report cites the case of Germany selling warships to Indonesia during the Suharto regime despite concerns over how the vessels would be misused in internal conflicts.

Japan also supported the development of an aluminum project in Indonesia designed to serve the interests of Japan’s aluminum exporters and which did not benefit Indonesians, the report says.

The Bataan Nuclear Power Plant built by former dictator Ferdinand Marcos, who ruled the Philippines between 1965 and 1986, was financed by The Export-Import Bank (EXIM), the U.S. government’s export credit agency, which provided loans and guarantees totaling 900 million dollars for the project.

The Filipino people continue to pay this debt and are projected to continue to do so until 2018, even though they have never received even a single watt of energy from the project, which ended up costing more than 2.3 billion dollars.

Italy sold three hydroelectric turbines to Ecuador when only two were needed, and despite evidence that the hydropower plant was unviable and had destroyed the local environment and communities.

The calls by the campaigners to deal with such debts are not without precedence.

In October, Norway decided to

cancel 80 million dollars in debt owed by Ecuador, Egypt, Jamaica, Peru and Sierra Leone after it determined that the loans were not granted in a good faith effort to promote development.

Anti-debt campaigners want Norway’s decision to serve as a model for other wealthy creditors to follow in order to ease the global debt crisis that has squeezed many developing nations.

The report recommended that G7 countries open official and impartial audits of illegitimate debt and that the enquiry’s recommendations be public, involve debtor nations fully and “lead to the cancellation of debts found to be odious or illegitimate.”

The International Monetary Fund estimates that total public external debt for the 54 lowest-income coun-

tries, which Gross National Income per capita of less than 860 dollars a year, stands at some 460 billion dollars.

These countries include Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Kenya, Senegal, Ethiopia, Myanmar, Uzbekistan, Gambia, Nepal, Vietnam, Ghana, Niger, Yemen, Nigeria and Zambia.

“Debts which are found to be corrupt, fraudulent and illegitimate must be cancelled and responsibility shared between the two parties,” Hurley said.

Rich nations, especially in the powerful group of bilateral creditors known as the Paris Club, and through multilateral lenders like the World Bank and the IMF, have long denied promoting illegitimate debt to corrupt governments or failed policies in developing countries.

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The Best Little Zoo In The World

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In Punta Gorda

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Triple \$48BZD
Get off bus at Catholic Church on
Main & Church Streets, walk down
hill 75 yards to Guesthouse.

Mahogany Heist

By: Meb Cutlack

As we head into the next General Elections and the flurry of promises that lie ahead, we might want to revisit one promise that turned into what may be the biggest swindle of the PUP administration.

The full story of the Mahogany Heights housing fiasco illustrates perfectly the perfidy, the corruption and the greed of the PUP. It also contains, within it, the evidence that could pull both Mr. Musa and Mr. Fonseca from their perches on high and dash them down to face the legal consequences of their misdeeds.

The land chosen for what was touted as the “satellite city” was first surveyed in the 1950’s by the Belizean City Planner and surveyor, Henry Fairweather, as a possible site for the new capital of Belize. He rejected the location as unsuitable and warned that the land lay in a giant basin “lower” than the Belize River - passing to the west - and that therefore it would always present a drainage problem.

Initially Premier George Price rejected this advice and intended to proceed with the project at La Democracia. It was only after British surveyors and engineers (Britain was funding the project) agreed with Mr. Fairweather on the unsuitability of the site, that was Belmopan chosen.

Now, all this information was available when the PUP announced as election gimic in 1998 their grand 10,000 new home housing scheme. A friend and close associate of the PUP hierarchy, Lebanese businessman Abdul Hamze, stepped in and ‘bought’ the land via government for around \$1,000,000. He borrowed the million from Taiwanese entrepreneur Johnny Kuo.

According to a recent article in the Amandala, Kuo was to get back his money after the land was resold. “The balance of \$7.5 million was to be split 50-50 between the two of them.” That brings the new value of the land to \$9,500,00 (plus or minus) bringing Hamze’s profit to an amazing \$7,000,000, which he was duly paid by Government.

This payment did not, of course, take into account the 50/50 split with Johnny Kuo and neither did Hamze.

Something went wrong at this point – for Hamze and the Musa/Fonseca Government. Johnny Kuo still had title to the land! The PUP Government, with all its resources, had not bothered to see if Hamze actually owned it! Nor, inexplicably, did they appear to care.

Here Amandala picks up the story again: “Even though, according to Elrington (Johnny Kuo’s lawyer) GOB has deposited \$2.5 million at the Registry, Kuo will not touch it because he

will now go to the Court of Appeal to get the \$3.5 million portion of the \$7 million GOB paid to Hamze. In fact, his argument will be that the Government paid the wrong person, and it must now pay Kuo his portion.”

Oh, what a tangled web we weave when we practice to deceive because not only was the land not in Hamze’s name but there had not been a ‘legally required’ subdivision done either. The government, in their hurry to announced their bonanza housing project, based everything on a hurriedly carried out land survey.

The plot thickens. According to Amandala, Kuo’s US\$1 million contract for the land purchase was reportedly lodged at the Musa and Balderamos law firm – the Prime Minister’s law firm - while a second agreement, described as a ‘mortgage’, was lodged at Barrow and Williams law firm, the firm of Opposition Leader Hon. Dean Barrow. (Hmmm...)

But getting the land was only part of the plan. To have the housing project, the government also needed a building firm and houses!

About this time a German backed housing company was going broke over a project they had undertaken in El Savador. Mr. Musa’s government was introduced to them by a group called Janus Foundation, then based near Georgeville on the Mountain Pine Ridge road.

Janus was an NGO of sorts which raised money in Europe by presenting Belize to the world as a half starved backward country in need of help. They wrote in their propaganda: “In Belize, as in many developing countries ... women are typically confined to domestic activities and have few opportunities for supplementing their families’ income.”

They added: “Janus has initially brought women into those segments of

its eco-tourism projects that are compatible with those traditional roles. Twenty-four young women, for example, have benefited from Janus culinary arts program to the extent of operating baking businesses from their homes.”

Well, Janus (before their web of respectability was swept aside and their boss was chased out of the country as an alleged molester of young girls) introduced Mr. Musa’s government to the German building firm in El Salvador.

This brought Janus a considerable financial commission from the German firm and it also brought in a huge amount of duty free equipment and hundreds of Salvadoran laborers at considerable cost to the Belizean taxpayer.

All that was missing now were the houses - and the money to buy them. The houses were found and bought, at great expense, in unassembled knock-together plywood units from a housing company in Miami. The funds, the many millions of dollars to put the whole equation together, was located at Mr. Musa and Mr. Fonseca’s usual milk cow - the DFC.

But here is the rub: Glenn Godfrey was the nominal operating boss of the DFC at the time and he did not like either the type of houses being imported or the “contract” signed (and the money to be paid by the DFC) to another Miami firm to assemble the bits of houses.

He refused to sign off on the deal and, presumably has, to this day, in his possession a signed order from the Mr. Musa/Mr Fonseca duo instructing him to go ahead despite his doubts.

He was right, by the way. The second housing company took their money and promptly declared bankruptcy! The questions to be asked of Mr. Godfrey, Mr. Fonseca, and Mr. Musa if, and when, the DFC Commission continues is; ‘Just how much money was spent on the entire Mahogany Heights fiasco?’

To this day there has not been a single legal title issued to home owners at Mahogany Heights and not even a shred of paper published to account for the untold millions of taxpayers money ‘wasted’ on this ‘crony’ deal.

The \$9,500,000 is only the tip of the Mahogany Heights iceberg (or should we say Titanic?) for over \$140 million was estimated as having been wasted on the project and other housing ‘schemes’ which included moving a lot of these crap houses elsewhere in Belize, including San Pedro.

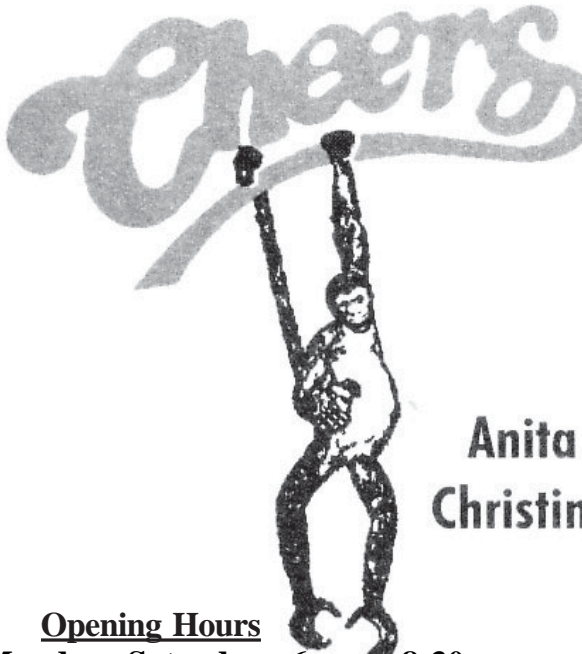
Here too, according to San Pedro sources, Mr. Godfrey again registered his disagreement with the whole project especially the so-called ‘houses’. For many years the unassembled structures rotted in an enclosed fenced-in property in unsightly piles at Mile 30 near the Belize Zoo. Others can be seen today ‘assembled’ in unattractive disrepair in both Mahogany Heights and San Pedro.

Lawyer Elrington told Amandala recently that Hamze has fled to Lebanon with the money, while his client, Kuo, has not gotten any of the proceeds of the \$7 million Government had paid Hamze for the Mahogany Heights land.

The question remains, was money handed over by Mr. Hamze for the PUP election ‘victory’? Again, only Mr Musa and Mr. Fonseca (and Mr. Hamze) possibly know the answer to this question.

We also haven’t heard the last of ‘Janus’ because one of their former bosses, who is now facing charges of child rape in Germany, is one of the principal backers of a new project “Belize Barefoot Properties”.

Under this ‘project’ parcels of land are being sold and resold to foreign investors from prime Reserve Land along the Macal River. More on this at a later date...



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Anita Tupper
Christine Tupper



ARIES (Mar. 21- April 20)
Take time to do something nice for yourself. Romantic opportunities will be plentiful if you get out and mingle. Uncertainty about your relationship is prevalent. Get more involved in group efforts at work. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

TAURUS (Apr. 21- May 21)
Listening can be more valuable than being a chatterbox. Your mate will appreciate your honesty. Don't rely on others to do your work. Take the time to help those less fortunate. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21)
Your dynamic, determined approach will win favors as well as a helping hand. Recognition will be yours if you meet your deadline. Y Give everyone in the house a physical chore that will help burn off some of the excess energy. Opportunities to get ahead will be evident. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)
You can expect to have a passionate time if you go out with someone you are romantically interested in. Your own small business on the side sounds pretty lucrative. Problems with relatives and friends could surface. You may find yourself in an uncomfortable situation if you have overloaded your plate unintentionally. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

LEO (July 23-Aug 22)
You are best to stick to yourself this week. Get together with those you find men tally stimulating. Plan a nice evening

for two. Being unappreciated by your boss could make it hard to do your work effectively. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 -Sept. 23)
Difficulties will result if you have to deal with controversial groups this week. You will feel tired and rundown if you have allowed yourself to get into a financial mess. You may find that family members may not be too easy to get along with. Throw yourself into your work. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 -Oct. 23)
Your devotion will be persuasive. Be prudent and don't be led down the garden path. You will have to help family members sort out unfortunate difficulties. Your efforts won't go unnoticed; however, someone you work with may get jealous. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)
Don't use the interstate as a racetrack. Difficulties with females you live with could cause emotional stress. You must not lead someone on or show interest in them for the wrong reasons. Try spending the day catching up on any responsibilities that need to be taken care of. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 -Dec. 21)
Try to spend some time on your own. You will accomplish the most in the work environment this week. Make sure all of your travel and driver's documents are in proper order. You will be able to get your own way if you use your intel-

VIP condemns BTL firings

Press release--The VIP categorically condemns the decision of BTL and Mr. Michael Ashcroft to dismiss without good cause the employment of the BCWU General Secretary, Mrs. Christine Perriott. Mrs. Perriott's dismissal comes against the backdrop of her vocal and unwavering support for the actions taken by her union in defense of workers.

It is clear to the VIP that Mrs. Perriott's dismissal is in violation of:-

- (1) The constitution of Belize- Chapter 4 – Protection of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms
- (2) The Trade Union Laws of Belize
- (3) The Belize Labour Laws
- (4) The Trade Union and Employer's Organization (Registration, Recognition and Status) Act
- (5) ILO Conventions # 87 Freedom of Association and Right to Organize
- (6) ILO Convention #98 Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively
- (7) The Collective bargaining Agreement between The BCWU and BTL

Workers and Belizeans on a whole must not take lightly the violation of our laws and the protection provided by international conventions. We must also safeguard the integrity of our Judiciary at all times. We can recall that this same company had also refused to accept the decisions of our Chief Justice and our Supreme Court!

Belizeans must be reminded that the protection of worker's rights have been fought for and obtained at the expense of workers lives and livelihood. It is therefore imperative that every effort be made to safeguard these fundamental rights and freedoms. It is very clear that sole intention of this particular employer is to institute a system of slavery which puts the welfare of a selected few or a single individual above the welfare of the people of Belize.

In the interest of our nation, we call upon the Government of Belize to immediately take steps to reinstate Mrs. Perriott and to resolve this matter once and for all. We also call upon Belizeans and workers to stand firm in the struggle to rid ourselves of those distasteful elements within our society who are hell bent on creating social disorder.

lectual charm and know how. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22.- Jan. 20)
Opportunities to make financial gains through investments look promising. Find a quiet spot where you can work diligently and stay out of the way. Don't play on your partner's emotions. Don't avoid situations that may deteriorate; try to mend them. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 -Feb. 19)
You can make financial deals that will bring you extra cash. You can make some money if you get involved in a conservative financial prospect that is presented to you. Keep a lookout for any individuals eager to confront you with unsavory situations. You can anger others quickly this week. Avoid overspending on items for your home. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

PISCES (Feb. 20-Mar. 20)
Praise will be yours if you have been pursuing your goals. The talk you have may be eye-opening with regard to your present situation. Insincere gestures of friendliness are likely to occur. Secret love affairs may be enticing; however, you must be prepared for the restraints that will follow. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



THE hunt FOR GOOD FOOD with Anthony Hunt

CAMBRANES

Freetown Road • Belize City

They once used to be a little corner shop, but now they have turned into the hottest thing since sliced bread...oh, wait... they ARE SERVING BREAD! I started going there some time ago, when the lines were short and the selection small. Now, between 3-6pm, the place is bustling with all sorts of people buying everything from Johnny Cakes for tea, French Bread, Coconut Pies, Creole Bread and Bun, and Panadero to the very popular Cheese Buns. The demand is now so great that if you don't get there early, sometimes you don't get any. In fact, their legend has grown so much that I often get a request via e-mail all the way from Ladyville to "please buy \$4 Johnny Cakes (which is 12) and drop it by for me on your way home". I oblige, in a cooler, to keep them warm and soft. No extra charge for the freight!

TOPICAL TIDBITS



It all sounds bananas!

Just last week the head of the European Commission in Belize, HE Ambassador Marco Mazzocchi—Alemanni signed over thirteen million dollars in funding to improve competitiveness in the banana and sugar industries in Belize.

As Channel 7 reported: “...this sounds grand, but it’s actually just staying alive money for an industry that experts say will wither without European subsidies that are being phased out.”

The European Union has committed \$5.4 Million of this money to ensure the Belizean industry can remain competitive.

However last week also brought news that Ecuador, a good friend of the USA and which accounts for about a quarter of all banana exports to Europe and the US, has appealed to the WTO to get rid of the competitive edge Caribbean and African bananas have in Europe over bananas from Latin American countries. These currently have to pay 176 euros (\$225; £119) per tonne on banana imports.

In contrast, annual imports from the Caribbean and Africa are currently duty-free unless they exceed 775,000 tonnes.

For St Lucia - all is not lost!

There, just when bananas were going the way of the dodo and banana farmers were “hanging up their machetes and ready to turn their steep hillsides back to forest..”, fate has intervened,

One of Britain’s largest food chains, Sainsbury’s, has stepped in and announced that all the bananas it sells from now on will be fairly traded, and that nearly 100 million of these will come from St Lucia!

Bananas, sugar and shrimp all dodoes?

The more evidence we see that Belize is becoming less competitive in the above industries, the more that our government appears to artificially encourage their survival. They do so at the expense of Belize’s entire future.

Instead of opting to encourage and stimulate the uniqueness of Belize’s natural environment for overnight and ground based tourism, which trickles down to everyone, the government keeps centering all its efforts on cruises ship and mega tourism projects.

These only benefit the cronies involved - and the megabuck promoters from abroad.

It truly is ‘bananas’ not to slowly wean

the country from its export dependence on ‘old’ uncompetitive industries and move into the world’s fastest growing tourism area – eco tourism which is, and can remain, Belizean based.

Rampant killing



Guatemalan style

Four top rank Guatemalan policemen, arrested in connection with the murders of three politicians from El Salvador, have been killed in jail.

The bodies of the three Salvadoran lawmakers and their driver were found in their burnt and bullet-ridden car near Guatemala City last Monday.

The policemen were evidently arrested after the ‘transponder’ on their vehicle revealed their whereabouts near the burnt car at the time.

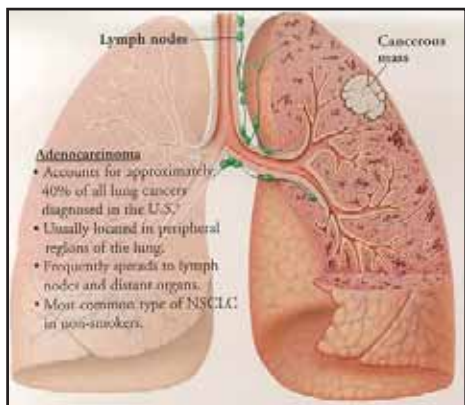
Caribbean hurricane fund launched

Caribbean nations hit by future hurricanes will be able to draw on emergency funding immediately under a new initiative by the World Bank.

The bank has launching an insurance fund designed to enable countries to finance key services in the aftermath of a natural disaster.

While Belize is not among the countries listed to benefit, which include the Bahamas , Barbados, Montserrat , Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica, it IS certainly among Caribbean countries which have lost up to \$16bn from hurricanes since 1979!

Cancer detector



US scientists have devised a colour test sensor which shows up unique chemical changes in the breath of people with lung cancer.

The hues of a series of 36 dots detect lung cancer accurately in just under three out of four people with the disease. The sensor, which is slightly bigger than a quarter dollar or a two pound coin, is inexpensive and easy to use.

Experts have known for many years that the chemical composition of a person’s breath changes when they develop lung cancer and that dogs – and other animals with a very keen sense of smell - are able to distinguish the breath of patients with lung cancer from that of healthy people!

Who was the hero?

The group of 12 tourists from the Carnival cruise ship Liberty, who were attacked by three armed muggers in Costa Rica last week, made it safely back to Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale on Sunday.

One of those tourists, a man in his 70s who has not been identified, broke the neck of one attacker, killing him, according to police in Limón.

The other two assailants ran off and none of the tourists were hurt, despite the fact that the muggers were armed with at least one knife and a gun.

The story received national attention and reporters and photographers waited at the exit gate of Terminal 19 in Port Everglades early Sunday, but the “Hero of the Liberty ,” as he has become known, didn’t identify himself and avoided the media.

Send Clinton packing?

‘No way!’ Said Sen. Hillary Rodham



Clinton in front of a huge crowd in the Democratic stronghold of San Francisco, raising campaign funds.

In response to a question from the audience, she called her husband “the most popular person in the world right now” and said that when she reached the White House, she would “...continue the tradition of using former presidents” ...as diplomats around the world.

Foreign companies face huge US fines

Foreign companies seeking to acquire sensitive US assets could face fines running into tens of millions of dollars if they violate agreements with a secretive US government panel that vets deals on national security grounds.

The inter-agency panel, the committee on foreign investment in the US, or CFIUS, is applying pressure on companies to agree to potential financial penalties. One attorney familiar with the situation says the government in one case opened negotiations by proposing penalties worth 10 per cent of a company’s sales.

The threat of fines provides further evidence of the growing obstacles facing non-US companies as they seek to gain regulatory approval for takeovers in sensitive sectors such as telecommunications and defence.

Mexico on Monday became the latest nation to file a complaint with the World Trade Organization over the Chinese government’s alleged payment of illegal subsidies to manufacturers.

The action signals Mexico’s growing frustration with a flood of Chinese imports, which has led to a soaring trade deficit with Beijing. It follows Japan’s announcement last week that it would join the United States in formally protesting state subsidies that it claims make Chinese steel, paper and consumer products artificially cheap.

The actions represent an orchestrated effort to pressure China live up to its WTO agreements more than five years after the Asian nation joined the world trade body. And it underscores growing impatience by trading partners who say they are losing jobs and market share as a result of China’s illegal trade practices.

Pain killers can kill!



Popular painkillers such as aspirin, ibuprofen and acetaminophen can raise blood pressure and thus the risk of heart disease among men, U.S. researchers reported on Monday.

Men who took such drugs for most days in a week were about one-third more likely to be diagnosed with high blood pressure than men not taking them, the researchers found.

Millions of people take the painkillers as pills every day to treat headaches, arthritis, muscle pulls and other aches and pains.

Tourism Minister ignoring PG



By: Chet Schmidt
PG correspondent for
INdependent Weekly

Minister of Tourism Godfrey Smith recently asked in his article in the Belize Times: “Where should we take Belize tourism?” The part that sticks out is the “we”. The recent Government of Belize Strategy and Action Plan for the development of tourism in Toledo has five projects listed under Enterprise Development and the Toledo Gateway Program. It also lists a budget for a three year time frame, and the source of funding and implementing agencies for these projects.

Although the Minister of Economic Development says a participatory planning process created this plan, the truth is that when representatives of the groups and agencies mentioned were interviewed, (see Friday, February 16, 2007 issue of the INdependent Reformer, page 9, “A perfectly good plan, going to waste” <http://www.belizenorth.com/Independent27.pdf>) and asked about the Gateway Program for

Toledo, not one had ever heard of it—including the CEO of the Ministry of Economic Development and the area representative for Toledo East Michael Espat.

Minister Godfrey was sent a registered letter in December 2006 which he ignored, and another one in February which has as of today remained unanswered. Both asked him what the Gateway Program in the Strategy and Action Plan is.

In his article he writes, “compared to any other single activity, tourism creates the most new jobs each year. Market trends suggest that tourists are looking for experiential tourism, that brand of heritage, cultural, and adventure tourism, not the usual kind of tourism.”

This description of what tourists are looking for, is a good definition of what the tourism part of the Toledo People’s Eco Park Plan offers. So why has the People’s Plan been left out of the government’s plan for tourism development in Toledo? Why does the Ministry of Tourism refuse to answer our letters? Why, after representatives of the Belize Tourism Board met with representatives of the Punta Gorda Conservation Committee, and the Toledo Eco Tourism Association, where they heard about the Six Day Eco Cultural Nature Conservation Tour, and proposal for a small cruise ship for Toledo—have both the Ministry and BTB refused to respond to our people’s cries for help?

Is it just out-right racism because the people of Toledo are mostly of Maya and Garifuna descent? Why has our area representative, Michael Espat told our groups re-

peatedly that these and other ministers refuse to listen to his pleas for help for our district that remains forgotten?

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Guatemala becomes Ungovernable

If the killing of three Salvadoran deputies showed fissures in the Guatemalan legal system, the execution of police tied to the crime corroborates the government’s incompetence to control national security.

“We are very worried because this confirms a crisis in the entire security apparatus, with severe consequences,” Human Rights attorney Sergio Morales said.

Guatemala has been the center of world attention since the Salvadoran deputies killing last week, but concern increased when it was revealed that four organized crime police were the alleged authors of the crime.

Amid the negative impact of the incident on the reliability of the security corps, the agents were mur-

dered at a maximum security prison this week.

Local analysts consider Guatemala is dangerously becoming “a failed country, where institutions do not operate.”

As repercussions of the scandal continue within the country and abroad, calls for the resignation of Government Minister Carlos Vielmann and National Civil Police Chief Erwin Sperisen have increased.

Both will be summoned by Congress to explain the execution of the agents, considered key elements in the deputies’ murder.

In a panorama marked by impunity, authorities’ lack of control, and indifference of the State powers, all indications point to a flourishing ungovernability.

Inspired Insights



An Ugly Belizean Secret



By: Rev'd LeRoy Flowers

There are many Belizean fathers, step-fathers, cousin, and brothers who are destroying the lives of innocent girls and sometimes even boys, through sexual impropriety. It is time that mothers, daughters, family members and the wider society hold these men accountable for their behavior by confronting them. The stories about incest are painfully numerous in our society.

Supreme Betrayal:-

The majority of incest cases involve children between the ages of 5-17. Molestations are most commonly carried out by step-fathers, uncles, cousins, fathers and brothers. Diane Russell, psychologist, calls the father-daughter incest the "Supreme Betrayal." What kind of man would assault his daughter? What kind of uncle would molest his niece? Surprisingly, research shows that many of the molesters are highly moralistic and devoutly attached to religious doctrines (Gebhard 1965). These men are often traditionalists. Father-daughter incest tends to, but does not always occur within a troubled marriage where there is a lack of values and purpose in the home. The man may abuse his wife as well as his daughter and turn to the daughter sexually when his wife rejects his advances. Many times the wife/mother pretends not to notice because she is afraid of her husband's violence, or she may blame her daughter for threatening to break up the family.

The Easy Road:

Often men do not realize how easy it is to become sexually involved with their daughters or nieces if they do not have the right sense of values and purpose. The unique relationship between fathers and daughters can sometimes lead to inappropriate relations if there is dysfunction in the family. Remember, church people are not exempted either!

The incest relationship usually starts very "innocently". Daughters look up to their fathers. They have a deep trust

and respect for the man who provides for her and her mother and gives a sense of security. When a husband and wife are having marital difficulty, the husband sometimes turns to the daughters to meet the needs that the wife usually provides. This may begin with cleaning his shoes, ironing his shirt, waking her up late at night to cook for him. She would do it because she "loves her father". This may lead to extended warm embraces and cuddling. Why would a little girl not enjoy such attention, for it is her father? This type of behavior soon intensifies until the love is betrayed when the father crosses the boundary and engages in a sexual activity with his daughter that may include caressing, petting, kissing inappropriately and eventually intercourse. He then persuades her to keep what they did a secret.

He may even threaten her and the relationship may go on for years; resulting in long-term emotional effect on the daughter.

Life-long pain:-

Studies show that "female" survivors are severely conflict-laden, experience rage and ongoing hostility to both parents, and hold all women in contempt.

Also they develop a distain for men. These female survivors almost never develop meaningful, lasting relationships. The most pervasive problem faced by survivors in relationships is around issues of intimacy.

Psychologists Lundberg - Love and Crawford state that a majority of these women have an inability to trust people and difficulty dealing with close relationships. Many survivors also become victims of domestic violence. They may feel unlovable and not worthy of being cared for. Thus, they often choose someone who is not very loving and who also perceives them as unworthy of being treated well.

There are also sexual dysfunctions that survivors usually have as a result of incest. These include desire disorder and orgasmic disorder. Survivors may also suffer from learning difficulties and poor attention spans. In addition, they may have symptoms of depression and low self-esteem, suffer from nightmares, insomnia and fear of sleeping alone. Research indicates that the physical/somatic results of incest survivors are chronic tension, migraines and gastrointestinal disorders. Wow! That's a lot!! And I haven't given you the complete list....but I will stop here. I hope you get the point. Incest is wrong and the long-term side effects are devastating to the victims and very distractive to the perpetrators as well.

We must begin to break this cycle of abuse by seeking help. By protecting our children and holding our males accountable for their actions. When children are sexually molested their capacity to trust can be shattered forever.

Their sense of who they are and what sex is about; it's often totally or substantially shaped by the sexually abusive experience.

Dads, uncles, step-fathers, brothers....stop raping our nation's daughters and sons. Too many family members cover up the hurt inflicted on our children. Have we tried to find out why there is so much anger and so many dysfunctional families are in our society? Relationships of trust are broken every day..

Who is responsible for this dilemma? The perpetrators are responsible, but Mothers you too must take a stand. It's about the well-being of your child. The larger society is also responsible for being passive towards such vice, creating the stage for mothers to cover up, deny and sometimes even support such relationships.

If our children and family members are to come forward we need to provide protection and support for them in a confidential and safe environment, which is lacking today with the organized system. They will need counseling as well, which is difficult to find in the wider society.

Yes, even within the legal framework, it is not easy to get a conviction. So often the victims are abused again going through the legal system. We must all change our attitude to this Belizean secret.

We must put an end to this vicious crime being inflicted on our children. Let's protect our children! Defend them. Give them the right values! Call the police! Stop raping our nation's innocence!

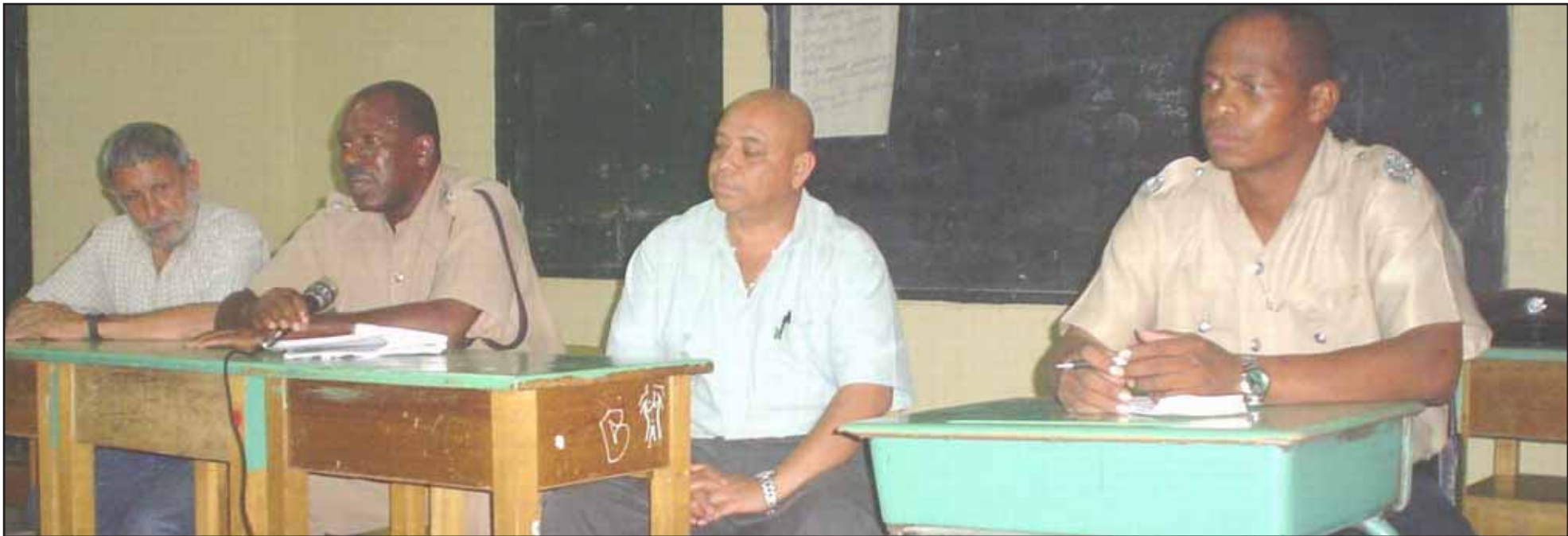
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San Ignacio Police hold Public Forum



Western Formation O.C. David Henderson and Area Representative Mario Castellanos listen to community concerns.

Press Release-- Police in the Cayo District held a public forum on February 26 at the Saint Ignatius High School in Santa Elena Town. The purpose of the public meeting was for there to be an information exchange on the status of crime in the District and to spur community action in combating crime. In his report to the meeting, Senior Superintendent David Henderson reported that there were a total of thirty one murders in the District in 2006. He expressed concern given that the Cayo District is a major tourist destination. He reported that alcohol was a major problem and that some premises were serving alcohol to minors. Superintendent Henderson informed that some eleven persons were about to undergo training in community policing. Henderson said that neighbourhood watches have worked very well in the Corozal District and they can do the same in the Cayo District. He urged parents to send their children to school or they will be arrested. Some three parents have been arrested thus far for not sending their children to school.

Present for the meeting was Area Representative for the Cayo Central Division, the Honourable Mario Castellanos. Minister Castellanos urged members of the public to take community action. He informed that the *Belize Electricity Limited* BEL

was charging Government for street lights within the Cayo District even though they were not functioning. He suggested that community groups can bring pressure to bear on BEL via a petition, given that tax payers' money was being lost in paying for unused lights. Minister Castellanos counselled that education is the way to go and that parents should send their children to the Centre for Employment Training to learn a trade.

In his report to the public, Police Constable and Zone Beat Liaison

Officer Darius Martinez announced that a female from Eden High School in Santa Elena had won under the "Do the Right Thing" Program for the month of February. The female had reported to authorities the presence of *Cannabis sativa* in 'fudge' to the authorities. Principal of Eden High School Erodito Pineda, in attendance at Monday night's meeting, thanked San Ignacio Police for assisting in creating a safe learning environment for his students. Also present was Mr. Andrew Lopez, former President of

the Crimes Committee.

Superintendent Henderson estimates that there is one police officer for every eight hundred residents in Cayo. The Police Brass confirmed that more man power is needed to serve the Twin Towns of San Ignacio and Santa Elena. With only two neighbourhood watches in the area, police are targeting for five more in coming months and to activate citizens on patrol. Another Police forum is planned and this will be announced later.

Vacancy

The Independent Reformer Weekly is looking for a sales person and/or agency to handle ad sales and collections.

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Applicant need not be based in Belize City or Ladyville, but must have own phone, email access and transportation.

Commissions negotiable based on experience.

Contact the General Manager at 225-3520 or email trevor_c_vernon@yahoo.com

1/2 acre lots in Burrel Boom starting at \$10K Call 600-1627 for details	10 acre plots in Burrel Boom starting at \$50K Call 600-1627 for details	Single-12 acre plot in Ladyville \$120,000K Call 600-1627 for details
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Buds-get reading 2007

☞ (Continued From Page 4)

everything. So we'll set up a charities fund and that's it. No more aspirin. No more weekly handouts at the clinic. I don't know who started these damned clinics anyway...

Moving on...goods and services. Madam Speaker, once more there was a bumper crop of sugar cane. Well, okay, this is the first time it went up in 15 year, but we are so optimistic this Government has decided to reopen the Libertad Refinery. We have a buyer in Panama who wants to see Sugar City live up to its name once more. He also has plans to convert part of the facility to an orange processing plant. And a laundromat. But more on that later...closer to campaign time. The place is called Orange Walk, a perfect match.

"Madame Speaker, it is with great excitement I also announce that oil revenues to government are being included for the first time in this budget. Yes, they were there before, but somehow never made it on the books. Poor accounting procedures. But, this time they are here, in black and white. I cannot vouch for their accuracy, it is difficult to keep track of all the buddy payments made since oil was discovered and offshore accounts do not issue statements with the same regularity as our local banks, but one must try. The official figure here is that with the commencement of collection of royalties on petroleum this year we took in \$6 million. Not a bad start. This should more than cover the cost of front load commissions on our international loan payments.

Madame Speaker this year our debt service payments of \$169.5 million will of course exceed the budgeted amount of \$145.7. But what is a few million anymore? Some of my colleagues sitting near me right now have homes abroad worth that much. I could write a check right now and cover the whole thing!

"We must not be afraid of spending a little money to make more. Belize has land selling like hot cakes, or should I say hot "cayes"? (tittering all around) for that right now, as soon as the land around them is reclaimed. As we speak Italian film stars are lining up to pay for their own private island. And when we run out, we can dump some sand and stick a few coconut trees and make some more!

"Madam Speaker, "the Belizean people are crying out for this government to embrace land speculation. And so are the international markets. American and European baby boomers want to retire here. This government will soon be announcing a retirement housing scheme in an area just outside of

Belmopan called Meighan Heights. Just as soon as the DFC hearings are over you will be hearing more about that, and also an area in San Pedro called Croft-Ash, beautiful retirement villas for members of British Parliament.

"Yes, in the upcoming year, Government will continue to improve financial management and accountability. Personally, I think that sort of thing will only slow down the economic train and decrease the trickle in the trickledown to droplets, but these are the buzz words the international lenders want to hear, not to mention the electorate.

"And yes, of course the Village Council Elections are approaching. So of course let me take this opportunity to announce we will be providing school books for all the children of Belize, increased electrification and potable water systems of the countryside, reliable digicell service for Burrell Boom and Cattle landing, and the eradication of all stray dogs and poverty in the Southside of Belize City. And yes, in addition to Libertad reopening, Orange Walkenos will be happy to see we have budgeted \$10m for the Orange Walk Bypass so Naranjas can bypass all the mess in town. "

"Excuse me, Mr. Minister, that project is already completed."

"Oh, really...that was just on the template we used for the past 8 budgets. Take that one out then. Computer error. Will have to send that program back to Canada, get the bugs out.

"And of course, let us give the poor people some satisfaction to see that wealthier Belizeans will soon have to pay more income tax. Yes, yes, I know we just lowered the threshold for payment to \$20,000 but Belizeans are becoming so prosperous so quickly we will be raising it again to \$24,000.

Our friends across the floor are always saying we tax the people too much, but Belizeans DO NOT mind. In fact they are happy to pay more so they can have good roads, better schools, lower crime. If you don't believe me, just look at this figure: the GST—so criticized by the Opposition—took in \$20 million more than even we estimated it would! The Belizean people, only 280,000 strong, somehow found \$20 million to pay in sales tax even though the Opposition says the economy is at an all time low! Does this sound like a poor country to you? People who can spend \$20 million and not even notice it?

This is precisely why we knew the Mortgage Securitization Plan would work. Belizeans are a hard working people and they will ensure they pay their mortgages so we can sell them and get the money to develop our banks accounts abroad, provide foreign exchange security and capital resources

abroad for years to come.

And to all those of you who have cast aspersions on the character of one of our standard bearers, let me tell you about this man. He inconvenienced himself, not once, but 14 times, to make those trips to Panama. Had to put up with the indignities of having to pass through customs although he had a diplomatic passport...Our detractors will stop at nothing to paint a picture of this government as falling down on the job when all we do is work! Morning, noon and night, we are working to take advantage of global markets, position ourselves advantageously, why we just

broke ground with our recent bond offering.

"Now, there are a great many more numbers here in front of me, but these are for statisticians and accountants, so don't worry about what's written here people, we have a nation to build! The path ahead is clear now. The horizon has the glow of hope and promise of a brighter few; the work of reform must continue...Together we can, we are living in a good country."

Oh my, I must have dozed off for a bit. I guess the House meeting ended while I was asleep. But I had the funniest dream...

Many Words but No Substance

☞ (Continued From Page 3)

them all together they could make a definite change and send the pirates walking the plank. The way things are going though, it looks more like four rowboats trying to attack a clipper ship.

The new parties are giving a new meaning to divide and conquer; only they have it all backwards. If there is any hope of being effective, the parties must unite their efforts. What is so disturbing about this is that it is so obvious you have to wonder why the leaders don't understand. Unite or perish!

The new party movements are a reaction to the desperation Belizean voters feel, realizing that if they continue to vote for the same traditional Blue or Red parties they are going to get the same traditional Blue or Red bandits stealing public lands and moneys and peddling influence, protection and favors for their personal gain. This ground swell from the voters is a great and wonderful opportunity to organize for better and more effective representation. Good generals are masters of tactics, strategy and leadership. Their goals are clearly defined and they know how to develop effective plans of attack to attain their objectives. Anything else is only dreaming.

Four or five little parties attacking the Goliath of entrenched government is like four little monkeys each crawling up a separate leg of an elephant with seduction on their minds. It is going to take more than desire and good intentions to unseat the power structure. It is going to take solid planning and preparation and the combined effort and cooperation of all parties involved. The voters want new choices and are now demanding it, but they are also demanding results. These parties should consider uniting into a Party of Independen-

dent Candidates. The PIC should develop a broad basic approach such as opposing corruption, recovering stolen lands and money, punishing corrupt politicians, promoting an elected Senate, etc.

And then each Individual Candidate should prepare his own personal platform describing what he stands for, how the people can expect him to vote on issues, and his or her plan to achieve goals. The individual personal platforms should be published. The voters are ready and demanding changes and improvements in our government. The press that is not Blue or Red controlled is ready to help promote the positive values of the new reform parties.

The first important point we have to get clear is where we want Belize to go. It is great to say we will clean up corruption, or we will take back all the land and money our Misleaders have stolen from us. But what do we want Belize to be? None of the parties seem to have thought much about this. You can't get somewhere unless you know where you are going.

Morality can never be a goal of government. What we need are the straightforward values of honesty, integrity, honor, dedication, commitment, loyalty.

Listen, Leaders of the new parties, listen to the voice of the people and respond. Listen to the voices crying out for reform and take action.

Listen to the desperation of our citizens enslaved by their government and create solid plans to free them. Bible thumping and personal glorification is the past not the future.

Listen to the voices of today pleading from every corner of our oppressed country and UNITE FOR STRENGTH.

The time is right. The people are offering an opportunity for victory if you use it well.

23 YEARS LATER

By: Richard Harrison

I am a proud graduate of Belize Technical College. In 1981 I enrolled in the General Studies Program to pursue the study of what was referred to as pure sciences - Mathematics, Chemistry and Biology. I also had to take a course called General Paper, which was basically English reading, writing and comprehension mixed with some Literature. At the time, that course (which I enjoyed so much) was being thought by Dr. Colville Young, the now Governor General of Belize. Dr. Young would probably still encourage me to improve on my poor punctuation skills.

At the time, most people I knew aspired to go to Saint John's College, which had an image of being more polished and upper-class, as well as with better academics and chances of getting scholarships to pursue further studies.

Technical College, as we referred to our school, had the image of being for the underprivileged and persons of lower academic merit. However, a couple years before I entered, a healthy academic rivalry had developed between Saint John's and Technical.

The likes of Dr. Egbert Grinage had left stories of very disciplined study and work habits, as well as winner of the prized OPEN SCHOLARSHIP, only two of which were awarded each year. John Mencias and Ambrose Tillett, one year ahead of me, and both Cayo *bwoys* like myself, continued in the footsteps of Dr. Grinage. They took both open scholarships the year they graduated in 1982. So, by the time I completed my first year at Technical, I was proud to be a part of an under-dog institution that was raising its head in academics. My colleague and friend Dr. Arsenio Figueroa, also from San Ignacio, took one open scholarship for Technical in 1983, and Dr. Paul

Balderamos (also a good friend) took the other for SJC. Another Cayo *bwoy*, CEO in the Ministry of National Development, Hugh O'Brien followed suit in 1984. I was an average student, more interested in making friends with the interesting students that came from all across the country, and opening up to this whole new world.

I invited my BTC friends to go with me to SJC parties, and vice-versa. In my small way, I feel I played a role in diminishing the negative portions of our rivalry, so that we could up-play the healthy academic rivalry. By the time we graduated in 1983, SJC students had gained great respect for Technical students, and vice versa, at least in the General Studies Department.

At the time, it seemed that General Studies was the face of the institution. We were physically in front, facing Freetown Road, and 'we' were facing off with the powerful SJC and making great strides to improve the academic image of our institution.

Yet....there were many other things going on at Technical.

At the 'back'.....there was the Building and Engineering Department....and Secretarial. I recall our principal, Mr. Owen Morrison, calling meetings with the entire student body on the steps of the Building and Engineering Department. Even within BTC, I understood that General Studies people felt themselves above "those at the back", who were the people learning to do plumbing, drafting, electrical, etc. Again, I crossed all over those silly barriers, and made many good friends from those departments, whom I consider friends until today, although I only get to see them on rare occasions these days.

Now....at that time....it was not normal to see women pursuing building and engineering studies. I distinctly remember seeing a pretty young lady hanging

out with the boys I knew to be from "back-a-building". I found out her name was Christine Quan, from Corozal. She was a pioneer for women studying in that department, I believe. She looked quite comfortable and well liked among her colleagues. She seemed an equal among them. She is now Christine Perriott, a professional engineer in her own right, earning her honest keep by serving in our nations telecommunications company.

I fondly remember a tall beautiful girl from Secretarial. Very charming and friendly, always smiling and ready to help organize school activities. I think her surname was Duncan then, but she is now Karen Bevans. She is using her tremendous 'people' skills to advance the work of our nations telecommunications company.

It is my understanding that most of Karen's and Christine's co-workers were also fellow students at BTC.

When I moved from San Ignacio to The City in 1981, Belize City was overtaken by the Heads of Agreement demonstrations. Belize Technical College, teachers and students, featured prominently in the scheme of things. BTC as an institution it seemed, encouraged free thinking and free spirits, and were very vocal and activist in its demonstration of that progressive 'human' spirit. This was all new to me....coming from the relatively tranquil western town. I loved the lively debates that took place on the creaky wooden veranda during breaks and after classes. The institution spent the resources necessary to keep its doors open for us to study and debate in the classrooms, until very late at nights. They understood that some of us did not have appropriate study environments at the cramped quarters we could afford to rent.

Christine and Karen are both prod-

ucts of that very progressive 'human' environment.

I understand that the 'modern' corporate world can transform people, especially those who do not have 'good' morals and values to guide them.

Belize is a small place, and changes are rapidly occurring.

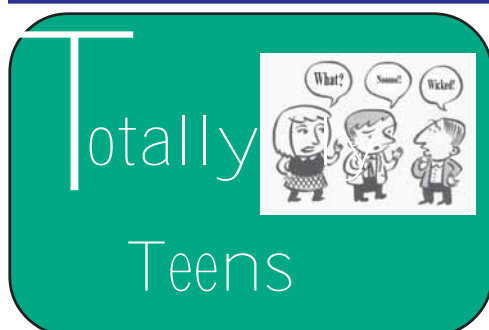
Governments have been changed. Board members can also change. Some board members are from abroad and are here for one purpose and one purpose only. They can get up and leave tomorrow, or be voted/bought out. Changes can happen very quickly and unexpectedly.

As Belizeans, who do not always have somewhere else to go.... and knowing that we live in a small place.... and it is very likely our paths will cross many times before we expire....it behooves us to act with respect towards our colleagues....to show empathy and compassion in our dealings with one another. It does not help us to be axe men and women against our colleagues. Although it may pay off in the short term, it surely will have its negative repercussions in the long term.

At BTC, I recall....we learned to debate our ideas openly and honestly...without fear of discrimination or retribution. Many times we had different opinions about a subject.... sometimes the differences were very wide....but we always respected the opinions of others...and that is how we earn respect for our own positions.

In conflict management, all parties must do what it takes, to preserve respect for each other, even as differences seem insurmountable and the horizon of solution seems far off.

In the heat of things.....it's good to be reminded that we have 'good' morals and values to fall back on....this goes for all sides of any 'story'. Calm heads will prevail.



The newlywed wife said to her husband when he returned from work, "I have great news for you. Pretty soon, we're going to be three in this house instead of two."

Her husband ran to her with a smile on his face and delight in his eyes.

He was glowing of happiness and kissing his wife when she said, "I'm glad that you feel this way since tomorrow morning, my mother moves

in with us."

A burglar has just made it into the house he's intending ransacking, and he's looking around for stuff to steal. All of a sudden, a little voice pipes up, "I can see you, and so can Jesus!"

Startled, the burglar looks around the room. No one there at all, so he goes back to his business.

"I can see you, and so can Jesus!"

The burglar jumps again, and takes a longer look around the room. Over in the corner by the window, almost obscured by curtains, is a cage in which sits a parrot, who pipes up again, "I can see you, and so can Jesus!"

"So what," says the burglar, "you're only a parrot!"

To which the parrot replies,

"Maybe, but Jesus is a rottweiler!"

Mrs. Peterson phoned the repairman because her dishwasher quit working. He couldn't accommodate her with an "after-hours" appointment and since she had to go to work, she told him, "I'll leave the key under the mat. Fix the dish washer, leave the bill on the counter, and I'll mail you a check. By the way, I have a large rottweiler inside named Killer; he won't bother you. I also have a parrot, and whatever you do, do not talk to the bird!"

Well, sure enough the dog, Killer, totally ignored the repairman, but the whole time he was there, the parrot cursed, yelled, screamed, and about drove him nuts.

As he was ready to leave, he

couldn't resist saying, "You stupid bird, why don't you shut up!"

To which the bird replied, "Killer, get him!!!"

A preacher is buying a parrot. "Are you sure it doesn't scream, yell, or swear?" asked the preacher.

"Oh absolutely. It's a religious parrot," the storekeeper assures him.

"Do you see those strings on his legs? When you pull the right one, he recites the lord's prayer, and when you pull on the left he recites the 23rd Psalm."

"Wonderful!" says the preacher, "but what happens if you pull both strings?"

"I fall off my perch, you stupid fool!" screeched the parrot.

Jaguar Express

What way to see The Belize Zoo!!



Mrs. Neileen Hufford checks out a scarlet macaw.

By Sharon Matola

Let's face it. Belize can get HOT, and some folks find our soaring temperatures, combined with the long and winding Belize Zoo pathways, just a bit too difficult to deal with.

Well, check it out!!! if seeing The Belize Zoo is high on your list, but walking the pathways isn't, here is some "Thumbs Up" news for you!!!

MEET THE JAGUAR X-PRESS!!

This is your own cushioned and customized ride - thru -the zoo.

The Jaguar X-press chauffeurs are zoo professionals who will not only wheel you through the zoo, but will enthusiastically provide an introduction about the happy animals who call The Belize Zoo their home.

The Jaguar Express maiden voyage was recently taken by Mrs. Neileen

Hufford, mother of Belize's one and only Sue Hufford, the energetic "Queen of Amigo's" restaurant on the Western Highway.

Neileen is a youthful over 75 year old lady who likes to save her energies for fun evenings at Amigos, so yes she was more than ready to take the Jaguar X-press around The Belize Zoo.

With her chauffeur, Allie Gomez, Neileen met most of the zoo's happy inhabitants, and as a special "maiden voyage" treat, she even helped feed Panama the Harpy Eagle, who didn't seem bothered at all by the colourful vehicle parked next to his exhibit.

Keep it in mind!!! the Best Little Zoo in the World is ready to accommodate ALL levels of energies from our zoo visitors!!

It is a zoo visit that is simply TOO WILD FOR WORDS!!



Belize Zoo attendants demonstrate how comfy the Jaguar Express can be!

Miss Rainforest out to protect Chiquibul



Miss Rainforest Margarita Valle with Friends for Conservation and Development staff.

San Jose Succotz, Cayo District, February, 2007

Miss Margarita Valle from Honduras was selected as Miss Rainforest on February 24th of 2007. The event had brought several contestants from Honduras and Guatemala and the Dominican Republic together with a representative from Belize for two weeks of activities aimed at promoting awareness about the importance and plight of the rainforests.

Rainforests are dramatically decreasing throughout the tropics. In Belize, we still have approximately 60% of the country under forest cover but this is under considerable threat from forest fires, logging and agriculture based activities moving into slope areas.

Friends for Conservation and Development [FCD] based in San Jose Succotz, partnered with the Director of Miss Rainforest International this year, Mrs. Nancy Juan Marin to promote the importance of the rainforests. Prior to the contest, Mr. Oswaldo Sabido, Miss Hannah St Luce of the Forest Department and FCD staff explained to the contestants the status of rainforests globally, regionally and nationally. Mr. Rafael Manzanero explained the importance of the

Chiquibul-Maya Mountains as one main block of thirteen protected areas with high biodiversity in Belize. He noted that an initiative led by the Forest Department in collaboration with FCD and other multiple partners is currently underway to develop an integrated management program that will be able to protect this block consisting of approximately 1.3 million acres of land. He further noted that FCD is now entering into a co-management program with the Forest Department for the protection of the largest protected area in Belize - the Chiquibul National Park.

The reigning Miss Rainforest, Margarita Valle will now join FCD members and its supporters in promoting awareness about the forests of Belize and in particular the conservation work currently underway in protecting the Chiquibul National Park. She will serve as our ambassador in promoting the importance of this beautiful forest located in the Cayo District and which shares a 30 mile border with Guatemala.

The Chiquibul forest faces several threats from unregulated development, lack of a management presence and illegal xate extraction conducted by Guatemalans.

Letters to the Editor

(Continued From Page 2)

to at least put more focus on the further development of the Eco-park plan. We recommend its time to start building a co-management plan with the participation from the people of Toledo. At the end result, we are sure that the eco-part will help to eliminate poverty in the Toledo District.

I congratulate Mr William "Chet" Schmidt for his help to establishing the TEA Guest house and Ecotrail program. This guest house is working for the people and like wise establishment of the Toledo Eco Park.

Sincerely,
Reyes Chun

SEVEN(7) PARTIES SADDLE UP

Where the seven political parties stand on the issues

Please find on page #16 a comparative analysis grid of the various political parties in Belize today who are actively preparing for the upcoming general elections. The grid lists the parties and the issues of the day. It is a work-in-progress and we expect the parties

to clarify their positions as we lead up to the election announcement.

Belizeans will most certainly have multiple choices in every electoral division for the upcoming general elections. There

are possibilities that amalgamations are in the works as efforts are continuing.

We intend to keep running the grid with updates as well as exploring the possibilities of providing other comparative analysis plat-

forms for you the people to decide. Some parties provided direct input (about half) while we gathered information from various sources on the others. [Coming next week, profile of the leadership of these parties]

ISSUES	UDP	PNP	WTP	VIP	NRP	GREEN-PARTY	PUP
Corruption	it's a pup thing [Same as WTP]	stamp it out	Whistleblowers Protection Act proposed	stamp it out	stamp it out/play for guidance	stamp it out	what corruption? (it's the price for growth)
Elected Senate	no real interest	not primary issue	"holy grail"	absolutely	yes	yes	no
Real Education Reform	see website	definitely	performance-based	high impact budget to affordable to all	yes	yes	big budget item (deterioration)
Cruise vs Overnight tourism	see website	overnight focus	balance needed	balance both	balance both	overnight healthier	cruise focus
Republican Form of Government	not an issue	referendum needed	studying it	study it	study it	study it	not so fast
Strengthening the Integrity in Public Life Act	system is fine	yes	with stiff penalties	fine & confine	yes	yes	no
Campaign Finance Reform Act	we don't need	yes	urgently needed	full disclosure for all	yes	yes	"not necessary"
Position on Money Laundering	not an issue	strengthen laws	with stiff penalties	strengthen laws	strengthen laws	strengthen laws	no such activity exist
Prosecution of FAT CATS	"no witch hunts"	yes	vigorously pursued	definitely with jail time where applicable	yes	yes	loaded question
Primary sources of funding	undisclosed	fundraising dinners& friends of PNP	membership and small to medium-sized businesses	Small contributions from Belmopan businessmen-mostly	prepared to spend \$50-100 million	undisclosed	undisclosed except Sir Barry's million
Specific Reform actions	published booklet with WTP	see flyer	60 specific actions (see release)	see website	see website	see release	nothing new but many new promises
Seeking pre election collation arrangement	maybe w/ WTP	yes	road to general election victory for Alternative Parties	willing to spearhead aggressively	not interested	not actively	not an option, yet
website address	www.udp.org.bz	coming	coming	www.vip.org.bz	coming	nationalreformparty.com	www.pupbelize.bz
email		info@pnpbelize.org	wehnepeople_belize@yahoo.com				
Sticking Point	"It's our turn!!!"	transparency	"reform, reform, reform	clean up the system	morality issues	environmental protection	living in a good country: lazy beggars the people have become