

# The Independent

Reformer for the People

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## Slick Oil Deals GOB Hog Up Royalties

**By: Des Parrette**


Andrew Cho of the Department of Geology of the Ministry of Natural Resources called a special meeting at Spanish Lookout to inform the Mennonites about the oil royalties they have never received. In addition to Andrew Cho, GOB was represented by Pedro Cho, Trinidad Petroleum Engineer Gardiner, and two other members. Gilbert Canton represented Belize Natural Energy (BNE), and Spanish Lookout was represented by Community leaders Henry Dueck, Abe Thiessen, Allan Reimer, Issac Dueck and Jim Cavanaugh.

According to accounts the presentation turned into a brawl with Jim Cavanaugh, the Mennonite Oil Consult-

ant, charging that the GOB was absolutely wrong in their interpretation of royalty distribution and that GOB was cheating all landowners whose properties would be involved in oil production. Landowner royalties are paid to the owner of the land upon which a well is drilled to compensate him for the damage and disruption. Cavanaugh stated that this standard international practice should be followed, but Cho claimed that individual royalty rights only existed in the USA and Canada, thus Belize could do what they wanted to and did not have to follow their example. Cavanaugh countered that Trinidad also had individual mineral ownership, which set a CARICOM standard that Belize was supposed to follow.

The dispute deepened when Cho stated that the already pitifully small royalty that landowners were to receive would be reduced by a further 29% for the Mennonites because "currently available technology" suggested that maybe the reservoir extended further to the north from the established Spanish Lookout production area, along a narrow structure about 300 yards wide, which they called the San Marcos extension. According to Cho all of the land over the total suspected reservoir should therefore be unitized; that is all the lands should be added together and considered as one parcel with each individual owner receiving a share of the royalty revenues depending on their proportionate share of the unit. Because

GOB had determined that the reservoir may extend farther north beyond the Mennonite property, then those landowners should receive a proportionate share. Cavanaugh argued that unitization was never done when all of the production involved only one property owner, and it was ridiculous and unreasonable to pay royalties to landowners who had no producing wells on their property or where no proven oil production occurred, simply on the suspicion that oil may occur in the future.

Cavanaugh pointed out that "currently available technology" simply identifies where a subsurface structure could extend which may possibly have oil. The only way to determine if oil is present is (Please Turn To Page 3) 

## Independents contest Ladyville Council



Chairlady candidate Sharon Turton


Saying they are neither UDP, nor PUP, a full slate of independent candidates is once more challenging the Ladyville village council elections.

The team is lead by the candidate for Chairlady, Sharon Turton, who has lived in Ladyville for 32 years. She owns her own catering business and is well known in the village.

She told Independent Weekly she was initially approached by the UDP who wanted her to run as a member of their slate, but she declined, telling them, "I will not run under any umbrella. Under any color." In her view "The village should be run by residents not political parties. By people who live here and

know it. I see people every day, talk to everyone. I can be more vigilant about what's happening."

Her son, Hosni, is also a part of the independent team. The two Turtons are joined by taxi driver Fernando Leal,

Martin Jimenez of Delmart Hardware, Odessa Gibson, Carolee Hecker and (Please Turn To Page 15) 

## Sails ahoy at Baron Bliss Regatta



Sea Scouts' dinghies 'Sea Gull' & 'Gannet' tack into the wind in the race for 14' sailing dinghies at 80th Annual Baron Bliss Harbour Regatta, honouring Belize's greatest benefactor.

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# Letters to the Editor

## PUP vs UDP

Dear Editor:

The PUP leadership is trying to use numerous tricks to suggest that the leadership of both [mass] parties is the same... the inference being that they are both evil and detrimental to the interest of Belize and Belizeans. I have heard their minions repeat this nonsense but I am surprised when other seeming right-thinking Belizeans take the bait hook, line and sinker.

The leadership of the UDP is diametrically different in my view and if I can walk through just a few examples to expound my point, please permit me.

I won't have time to address every "nitti-gritty" but maybe I can discuss the larger ones in my view.

The national debt was managed by both the UDP and the PUP, during their respective terms in office. Today the single largest negative influence for growth and development in Belize is the **3 billion dollar debt**, recently refinanced at tremendous new costs. On page 3 of the 1998 PUP "Set Belize Free Manifesto" the present prime minister of Belize argued that Belize needed to be set free from "a staggering" **\$385 million debt**. The inference here is someone carry a load they can barely handle and there struggling and staggering with it. That was \$385 million. *The only thing the PUP government grew was the debt... by \$2.5 BILLION.*

Given the opportunity he, Said Musa, unconscientiously in 8 short years drove the debt to now close to \$3,000 million and lies repeatedly about it. The difference is that the UDP never lied about the figures; and secondly, restricted Belize's debt burden even if it meant modest 5% growth in GDP and restricted government spending.

Government Spending has been the

biggest impetus for the increase in debt. The UDP offered realistic budgets that all the numbers were verifiable and correct and maintained government spending primarily by getting value for money. The PUP used government spending primarily to quench the insatiable thirst for money of their persons, friends and cronies. Government spending then fueled the now intransigent and deep rooted corruption within the PUP and has been the hallmark of the Musa administration.

DFC under the UDP was a vehicle for soft loans to private sector business, students, and housing and agriculture activities. DFC under the PUP hemorrhages under the corruption, nepotism, insider trading and wastage that we all knew and that the present commission of inquiry is confirming.

Secondly, BTL under the UDP was designed and strictly managed with Belizean ownership and control. Under the PUP it has literally gone to the dogs with admitted "parallel market" foreign currency activities.

There is a chasm of difference between the UDP and PUP leadership. The UDP has demonstrated sober stewardship of our finances and, by comparison, is infinitely more qualified to run this country than the PUP.

signed, Robert Tillett

## God Bless the USA & Belize

Dear Editor:

As a constant reader of the Belize news online, I am able to keep abreast of the news and activities within this new dynamic emerging nation where I was born many decades ago (precise number is not relevant).

One of the issues that have always

bothered me, is this incessant attack on the USA, especially white America. Before I continue, I must say I am a dual citizen who loves Belize dearly, but have also come to love my adopted country in spite of its many flaws because I have also seen what is good about America. And believe me, there is much that is good about America. I may be accused of complicity here since I married one of those white Americans, and became father to four wonderful caring citizens not only of the USA (and one of them of Belize), but of the world.

Much may be wrong with white America (as I suppose with many other countries be they white or non-white), but there are many within that group that constantly fight and struggle, and yes, are even killed, to bring about equitable change. No other country in the world with this type of vast diversity has handled its diversity as well as America because of its strong laws and its strong press and media. America still remains a country of first choice for the majority of the world's citizens who wish to emigrate, or even just those who wish to be educated. Without its dynamic economy (not always equitable) its Latin American contingency (Belize included) would not be able to send over \$30 billion to its families in their homelands.

Please do not misunderstand me. I am not advocating that we excuse what is wrong with America in general—and white America in particular. God knows racism is hard to eradicate, and is not the exclusive domain of white Americans. Progress in this area may never be complete, but hopefully, we are going in the right direction. Those white Americans that travel in that direction (and there are many) deserve better than

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# By Any Means Necessary



**By: Trevor Vernon**

The nation was treated last Friday to insights into the mind of the Right Honorable Ralph Fonseca. The man is a master at redefining standard concepts, especially generally accepted accounting principles. The Inter-American Democratic Charter never figured they'd have to deal with this super minister's mindset. Did they?

In this man's world, the IMF is the enemy, not the greedy usurping government structures he created. He has to outsmart

and outmaneuver them with his "measured deviations from orthodoxy" . . . to protect the people, he says. Brilliant concept: outsmarting the draconian "cookie cutter" solutions the IMF dictates. Its not that the Minister and his people set out to do anything underhanded; in their minds they had to save the people of Belize from the painful standardized remedies of this Bretton-Woods organization.

What can be nobler? The only problem is, in "rescuing" us, is he subjecting us to explosive consumption taxes that cripple the ordinary people of this country who do not qualify for GST exemptions, GST refunds, duty free fuels and tax-free containers from Panama.

What could be worse than 10% GST? Perhaps only the 100% RRD on gasoline. I mean really, last week I had to pay 10% GST on a doctor visit. I told him I

don't need a receipt but he insisted. Why do I need more paper?

The "Save Belize (from the IMF)" tax regime that has been unleashed on Belizeans is the coldest homegrown policy of them all. It's worse than the generally accepted rampant official corruption. It's now wholly acceptable to disabuse this country of its finances, but it sure as hell ain't acceptable to do so at the expense of the people who elected you. . . with massive, massive consumption taxes. You can get rich quick and load up those offshore accounts (by whatever means necessary); but, you had better cut the people some slack and fast. The natives are beyond restless.

The Minister says he has an electoral mandate from the people. Yes, but he has twisted it to become some supreme power, a divine right (handed down by Price) to accomplish everything his party promised, by whatever

means necessary. People are afraid to speak out against this man when he admittedly screwed up and did so royally. Why? Is it because he controls the security forces with an iron fist or because he has a perverse sense of power, or both?

Whatever his mindset, he is certainly a master predator who instills the fear of God into the hearts of many. Is that what we elected him and his party to do to us? While hiding behind his "sworn to secrecy" cabinet oath of Said? (Notice he doesn't have amnesia.)

We can no longer afford to keep these people in office. They are ruining this wonderful country they had nothing to do with building. His testimony at the DFC inquiry was revealing. Not necessarily in what he told the commission, but what he showed of himself to the rest of us. . . and I am sure he knows other people were listening keenly.

## Slick Oil Deals: GOB hog up royalties

➡ (Continued From Page 1)

to drill and establish commercial production. He reminded the GOB representatives present that royalties are paid only on the oil that is produced, not on oil that is "suspected", and until such time as it was proven that a suspected area contained commercial oil, there was absolutely no basis for unitizing. Allan Reimer demonstrated with diagrams that 98% of the total production from the suspected field would still be produced from the Mennonite lands, even if the suspected area is found to have oil sometime in the future.

Cavanaugh further argued that a well, referred to locally as the "Musa Well," had already been drilled in the suspected extension of the field, and it had been a dry hole. Trinidad Engineer Gardner said that he believed there was a fault that separated the dry well from the suspected field extension, and that the Musa Well was drilled on the wrong side of the fault. Cavanaugh charged that it was obvious GOB had already made the decision to screw the landowners and the Mennonites were dealing with a closed mind.

The "Musa Well" is troublesome. Was a Musa or The Musa involved here? A BNE worker was asked, "Was there any oil in the Musa Well?"

"Some, I guess, but not enough to make a well so they shut it in."

"Why do they call it the Musa Well?"

The worker hesitated a minute. "Ahhh, I dunno nothing about nothing, Mon. Forget we talked. All I know is a cousin in the Lands Department said that as soon as BNE found oil, all the politico big shots were in the land office grabbing up any government land around Spanish Lookout they could get."

Couldn't get any more information, so contacted Jim Cavanaugh, who said the whole deal was so outrageous he didn't even want to discuss it. Cavanaugh

brought up another troubling question though. Cho reported that the government had received \$BZ 2.6 million in royalty payments, the landowner gets only 5% of the GOB 7.5% share. Of course now it is only 71% of the 5% of the 7.5%. But BNE had earlier reported selling 811,000 barrels for 2006. Considering the average price of crude oil was around \$BZ 120, and the total oil income reported in the media was some \$BZ 97 million, the GOB royalty of 7.5% should total some \$BZ 8.7 million. What happened to the other 5.9 millions dollars and the landowners share of it? That means 70% of what is due the landowner is missing!

To put this into perspective, suppose a well is drilled on your farm and it produces 100 barrels of oil a day. The total revenues will be \$BZ 12,000 a day. Here is how the money is distributed:

GOB 7.5% Royalty	\$ 900.00
GOB 1.5% Production Sharing	\$180.00
GOB 40% tax	\$4800.00
GOB 10% ownership in BNE	\$1200.00
GOB TOTAL	\$7080.00
BNE	\$4920.00
Landowner: 5% due	\$45.00
70% disappearance -	\$31.50
Balance	\$13.50
ield expansion 29%	\$ 3.92
<b>Total left for landownern</b>	<b>\$ 9.58</b>

This means that GOB would be raking in over BZ\$ 2.5 million a year and the landowner won't get enough to buy dinner each day!

And the Musa Well? Cavanaugh said he didn't know anything about the land deals, and all he knows is that well made no sense at all.

"Consider that you have five good wells in the Spanish Lookout field capable of producing a thousand barrels a day each. It costs about a million Belize dollars to drill a well, so why would you step out a

mile away from the field where you know you are going to get another good well, and drill a high risk wildcat? The speculation is it had to be a political well because it just didn't make good economic sense. I guess it makes sense if the politi-

cians gobbled up the San Marcos land; because even if it doesn't have oil, someone is now going to get a big cut of the royalties that should go to the Mennonites. That's why I think this horrendous greed is so outrageous."



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# Top of the class



**By: Karla Heusner Vernon**

Like all parents of children in Standard 6, my life has been consumed by preparations for the Primary School Examination. Now, just days away from the first portion, it might not happen. At least, the teachers may boycott the sitting and the grading.

But I am not upset, or disappointed. Not in the teachers.

The educators of this country were humiliated by their own Ministry of Education a couple of weeks ago. The Ministry went public with dismal results for teachers who sat the exam themselves. Some 70% did not pass.

It is a dismal performance. No doubt about it. It is cause for serious review of both the teacher's skills and knowledge levels, the examination, and conditions under which it was given.

But I would hazard a guess that after similarly pathetic results from Belizean children several years running, that if our teachers had their way, they would re-teach the material or revise the test, or both. All seasoned teachers know the normal examination curve puts the ma-

replace an equally poor BNSE, is still being given. And why were these results released now, when they have been available since December? Just what was the Ministry trying to accomplish in the middle of union unrest over BTL firings, and calls for strike action by all the trade unions, including the most active arm at all, the Belize National Teacher's Union?

Angry, hurt, betrayed and insulted teachers are the last thing the govern-

tion? Some five thousand are even now preparing to sit the PSE at the end of this month. They have spent months in evening classes, Saturday classes and many schools will pull them in from Easter vacation early to get ready for Part II.

Does the Ministry care about their sacrifice or the fact that now many Standard VI-ers, are wondering if it matters how they do on the PSE since the grownups they know can't pass it anyway? May have lost their motivation?

What was the ministry thinking? Or were they not thinking at all? Surely they could have waited a few more weeks until the exam was over...

My own daughter has been told by every adult she knows that her performance on the PSE is critical, not only to her admission to the high school of her choice, but possibly her future performance in high school and beyond. Her entire family—and a lot of concerned, loving friends—are urging her to study hard, learn her formulas, practice... (Please Turn To Page 14)

**Angry, hurt, betrayed and insulted teachers are the last thing the government needs right now...**

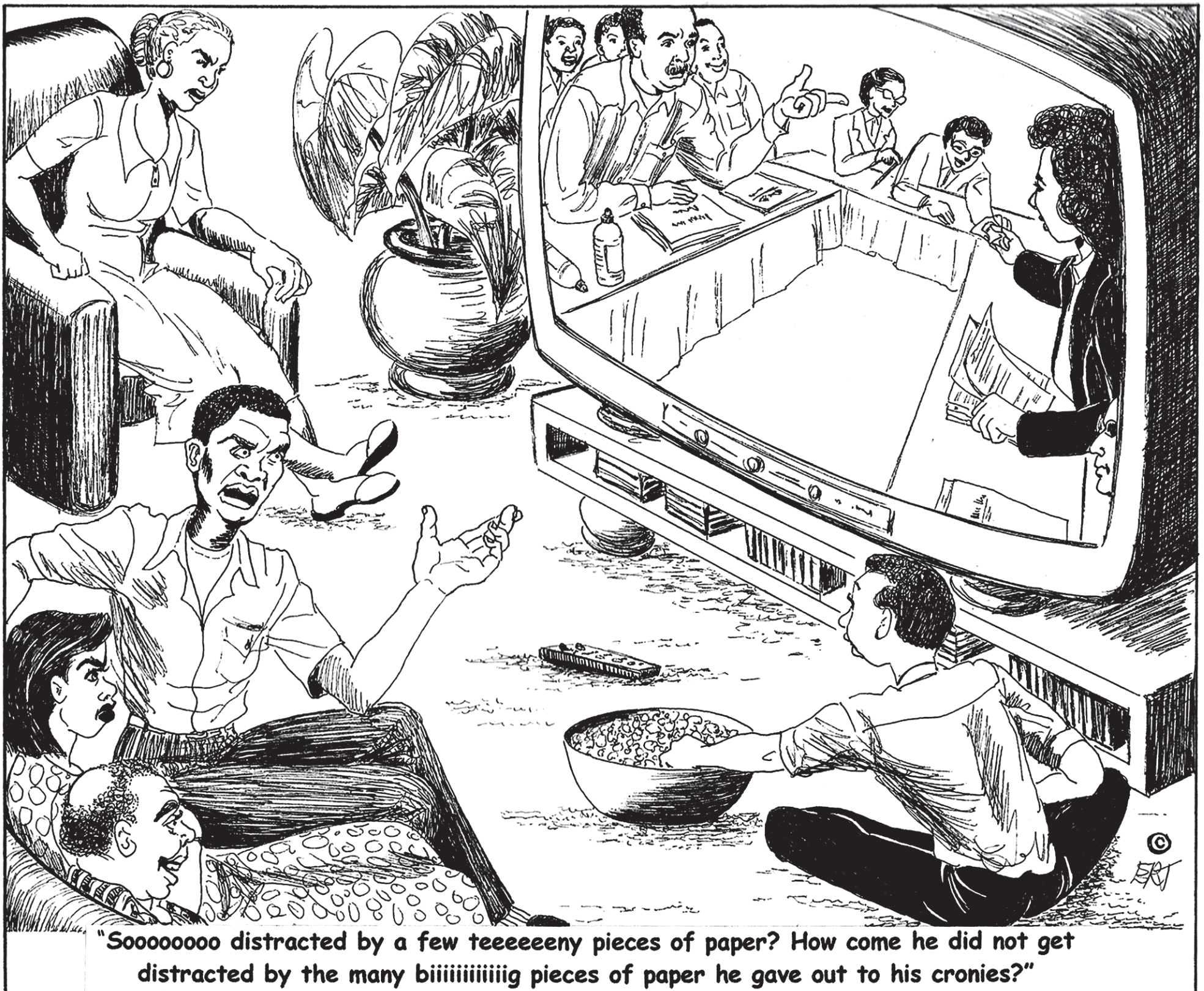
jority of the students in the middle range, not the bottom.

Only hard headed people keep giving a test the majority of otherwise intelligent people fail. Or people who have something to gain from its administration, printing and distribution.

One cannot help but wonder why this test, which was devised supposedly to

ment needs right now... So who dropped the ball? Was it a mistake to go public? Or, a calculated move to deflect blame for what may yet another expected poor performance on the PSE by yet another crop of Belizean children?

Speaking of the children, did anyone in the Ministry consider THEIR reac-





# An Evil Eye Opens Up Again

## By Mirien Gutierrez

Operation Malocchio ('evil eye') as it was called, was "one of the biggest" anti-money laundering operations ever launched in Italy, says former prosecutor Giovanni Salvi who was in charge of the investigation together with his colleague Pietro Saviotti and investigating judge Otello Lupacchini. Investigation began in 1996 into hundreds of millions of dollars in proceeds from the smuggling of 900kg cocaine out of Latin America. **By 1997 the network was set to 'import' 5,000 kg of cocaine and buy a bank in Belize, according to a report by Espresso magazine in Italy.**

Operation Malocchio was launched after Italian authorities carried out "an information exchange with the U.S. FBI," said a report issued in 2001 by the anti-mafia investigative unit (DIA) of the Italian ministry of interior. The aim was "dismantling a complex crime group involved in the trafficking of significant consignments of cocaine coming from South America, as well as in money laundering and in the re-investment of huge capital through international financial channels."

The probe led to several arrests in 1998. In 2001, 15 people were convicted for laundering money from narco-trafficking, including kingpin Fausto Pellegrinetti. But he escaped and is still a fugitive. Appeals against the sentence were rejected. **Accomplices in Panama, and also in Brazil and Belize (a tiny Central American nation with a population of 273,000 bordering Guatemala and Mexico) had a prominent role in the money laundering and re-investment scheme, according to documents seized by the Italian police.**

In October 1997 Italian authorities asked Interpol in Panama for information that could link three suspect telephone numbers with well-known Panamanian politician **Alfredo Oranges**. **Oranges** was then a serious contender for presidential candidacy in the 1998 elections from the Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD). Interpol Panama confirmed that the numbers belonged to **Oranges**.

The Financial Analysis Unit (UAF) in Panama then discovered that money from outside the country was being transferred regularly to and from the local bank accounts of the company Clark's Investment Corp. **Oranges** was authorised to sign documents on behalf of Clark's Investment, the UAF said. This corporation "has served as bridge for a series of banking transfers that cross several countries without an apparent motive or commercial activity justifying them," said the UAF. Some of the transfers were higher than a million dollars.

Edwin Arias Castillo, a Clark's Invest-

ment executive and **Oranges** 'associate, was also treasurer in another corporation France Mistral, S.A., where Lillo Rosario Lauricella — kingpin Pellegrinetti's right hand in Latin America — was vice-president, the UAF noted. "Vast amounts of money from outside were deposited through Panamanian corporations in local bank accounts, where they would stay for a couple of days and later were transferred to a bank in another country," Jorge Mottley, former head of Interpol Panama told IPS in a telephone interview. Mottley had joined investigation of the Panamanian ramifications of the case.

The Italian investigation was revealed at a press conference in 1998 by President Ernesto Pérez Balladares, **Oranges** 'rival in the PRD. As **Oranges** protested in Panama, in Rome judge Lupacchini ordered the preventive arrest of 58 people including Oranges as alleged members of a criminal network engaged in narco-trafficking and money laundering. Italian authorities said in the arrest warrant that the criminal network had deposited 250 million dollars in Panama.

Then Panamanian attorney-general José Antonio Sossa sent special anti-drugs prosecutor Rosendo Miranda to Italy in October 1998. Miranda dispatched a facsimile from Rome stating that the Italian authorities had evidence linking the money in transit through Panama with the narco trafficking operation, says Mottley. Several documents seized by the Italian authorities indicated that Lauricella had contributed to Oranges 'presidential campaign. Oranges later admitted this.

Mottley says Miranda took back a request from Italian authorities to freeze the funds linked to Oranges and to interview him in the presence of a representative of the Italian prosecutor. "Nothing of the sort happened," he adds. Inexplicably, attorney-general Sossa concluded there was no evidence against Oranges.

In 1999 Panamanian daily La Prensa published an interview with Oranges in which he admitted that he had been meeting for years with Lauricella, who he said was interested in the casino business. Oranges said he did not know Lauricella's background, and could not possibly have investigated all his associates. According to Panamanian migration authorities, Lauricella seems to have lived in Panama from July 1996 to February 1998. Lauricella declared himself a "gardener" living in the not exactly cheap Hotel El Panamá.

Meanwhile in Rome the order to arrest Oranges was cancelled. "As the person who put together the case, I am sure there was enough evidence (to investigate **Oranges**)...more than enough," says Salvi now. "As a matter

of fact we asked the judge for a warrant, and it was granted by the investigative judge (Lupacchini). But the Tribunale del Riesame (court of re-examination) decided differently." That was due to what court officials called a "technicality".

Marco Lillo, a journalist from Espresso who has written about the case says the Italian authorities were only interested in the Italian suspects. "And as you can imagine, the reactions (from other countries to the requests sent by the Italian authorities) were not very enthusiastic."

Before matters reached the court of appeal in Italy, investigation progressed with the help of information provided by Lauricella, who became a "cooperating witness". Operation Malocchio now revealed that the proceeds from narco trafficking were invested in several businesses, from the import of exotic fruits from Santo Domingo (in the Dominican Republic in the Caribbean) to the installation of thousands of slot machines in Brazil.

In 2000, Lauricella — the cooperating witness who had been the link between the gang and its Latin American ventures and on whose statements the investigation was based — was con-

victed but vanished, says Luca Armeni, deputy chief of the DIA. "When you have a trial as difficult as this money laundering case, you need two things: good documents and good cooperating witnesses," says Salvi. Lauricella, he said, "revealed himself not to be a good witness when he disappeared."

Lauricella went into hiding under a false identity, and in 2002 was shot dead outside a casino in Caracas. It was difficult to identify his body because of the multiple facial surgeries he had undergone, according to a report in Espresso in November last year. The local fallout of the case was not investigated either in Panama or in Belize, but in Brazil the case led to an investigation that is still continuing.

The Italian DIA sent the Brazilian authorities information provided by Lauricella. Some of this information was made public last month by the Instituto Brasileiro Giovanni Falcone (IBGF) set up to fight organised crime (it takes its name from magistrate Giovanni Falcone assassinated by the mafia in 1992.) "The introduction in Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro of slot machines served as a tool to launder money produced by international narco-trafficking," the IBGF said.

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## 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](mailto:undp.bze@btl.net)



# Family Values

**By: Meb Cutlack**

No, this is not about caring families but about greedy families who snatch public land for themselves and for speculation in a totally illegal and often secret manner.

The Guardian's recent exposures of PUP land grabs reveal only a tiny glimpse of how in fact these families are enriching themselves at the expense of Belizeans.

As the Guardian recently stated: "Readers may recall that it was Ainsley Leslie and Servulo Baeza that had "sold" tourism developer Carlos Popper some 5 acres of caye property on which Popper invested close to \$1.0 million only to find out later that the land was owned by someone else. He had paid some \$150,000.00 for the 5 acres he was 'sold'."

The newspaper added: "Ainsley Leslie (and Servulo Baeza for that matter) has therefore fully established himself as a land speculator and not a land developer based on his involvement in the phantom "sale" to Carlos Popper. So

why are he and his family grabbing up so much prime Government land hand over fist?"

Evidently, according to documents received by the Guardian members of Ainsley's family acquired the following: 16.343 acres at Rendezvous Point, Turneffe Islands, 0.004 acres south of Little Vaqueros Creek, Mountain Pine Ridge, 10.052 acres south of Rendezvous Point, Turneffe Islands, 10.039 acres south of Rendezvous Point, Turneffe Islands

The Guardian also lists 10.206 acres on Turneffe which went to a friend of Leslie's, one Larry Goss.

The above accounts are but the tip of the iceberg and represent only a tiny proportion of land scooped up by Mr. Leslie.

The method often employed by to assume and then sell on cheaply acquired prime land was outlined in a Reporter article several years ago. As a result of an investigation by this columnist - for The Reporter - it was shown that Mr. Leslie (in his various capacities

of Deputy Land Minister and acting Land Minister) issued conveyances (not the above mentioned) to third parties for numerous tracts of land, inland and on the cayes, for ridiculously low prices.

These lands, once conveyed, were not registered - as required by law - but handed over as a means for the third party to 'sell on' at high price. Registration would only take place when the so-called 'first' buyer found a second buyer. Profits must presumably have been shared by the illegal seller with Mr. Leslie or, in some cases, with his family.

The Guardian: "As we have seen before, when such lands are sold to foreigners, they attract rates of US\$50,000.00 per acre and above.

"It is only right that all Belizeans should be able to own a reasonable piece of the "jewel"; we have nothing against anyone owning his or her piece. But it is totally unfair that PUP "first Belizeans" should be able to grab so much prime lands, mostly for

speculation, while the majority of us cannot own even a small 50 feet by 75 feet house lot, or are charged market value for such lots."

Several years ago this writer gave a lift to a resident from one of the villages on the Western Highway. He had a small business in San Ignacio and rather than travel every day to and from his village he applied to Mr. Ainslie for a plot of land to build a house on, in, or near, San Ignacio.

Mr. Leslie denied this working Belizean the right to even a small plot of land. At the same time he was 'giving' valuable tracts of land in the district to friends and family. Some of these lots he 'assigned' were actually part of a large parcel in a housing project which had been reserved by government for a school. The whole 'school reserve', and a nearby area reserved for a park, were sold by Mr. Leslie.

As The Guardian stated - this wholesale robbery of lands owned by all the people of Belize must stop!

## Forensic DNA Examiner gets U.S. Internship



*DNA Examiner Gasper Sanchez*

DNA Examiner Gasper Sanchez of the Belize National Forensic Science Services returned March 4, 2007 to Belize after attending a two-month DNA Internship program at the Harris County Medical Examiner's Laboratory in Houston, Texas. The internship program was invaluable in helping Mr. Sanchez gain insight on important duties, responsibilities, and requirements of his job. Mr. Sanchez was able to familiarize himself with the standard operating procedures and methods of analysis performed at the facility, all of which will help Belize to develop its own capabilities in the area of forensic science.

According to Gaspar Sanchez: "The training was excellent, both in terms of knowledge gained and the

experience gained. The facility is an accredited institution with state of the art DNA equipment, all of which I had the opportunity to use. This knowledge and experience gained will prove vital in the development of the serology section of the National Forensic Science Services and by extension the country of Belize as it will improve level of service we offer."

During the first phase of the program, Mr. Sanchez observed the

different extraction techniques employed at the DNA laboratory and quantification, amplification and running of extracted DNA as carried out by analysts.

In the second phase of the program, Mr. Sanchez had hands-on training and started to carry out the processes himself. He practiced extraction techniques for different samples, all in accordance with U.S. standard operating procedures. He also had hands-on train-

ing on the quantification, amplification and running of the known samples.

Funds for the training were provided by the Department of State, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), on behalf of the U.S. Embassy Belize. The project was coordinated through the assistance of the Department of Justice, International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program.

# Nature's Way Guesthouse

In Punta Gorda

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**hill 75 yards to Guesthouse.**



# MOE goofed in publishing Teachers' PSE results

By Thomas Oliver

It was reported in the news recently about the Standard Six teachers' performance on the Paper 2 of the PSE Mathematics and English. I would like to question the rationale of the MOE to go public with those results. The teachers, Managers and the MOE knew them, so what is the purpose of telling the world? What was achieved by doing this?

What they have failed to realize is that by releasing those results, they have helped in lowering the morale of teachers country wide as well as have parents and students making accusations of ALL Standard Six teachers. While I must agree that some teachers are not qualified to teach Standard Six or any class in the Primary School, I would also like to comment on a few things concerning the examinations taken by the teachers and about teacher training.

The teachers who sat those PSE tests were given limited time to complete them, without any prior knowledge that

they would be given the tests. They did not arrived at that workshop in a frame of mind to go and do any test. We were not in an examination setting as there were several persons sitting around the same table. One will find that even though some teachers are capable of teaching letter writing and composition to Standard Six students, they may not be able to themselves write an excellent letter or story in thirty minutes. I know that I used up some of the time in reading the questions and deciding on which topic I would write - topics which many of us found inappropriate for Standard Six students. Any good writer would write and edit his or her writing. There was no time for that. It makes me wonder whether this was a deliberate attempt to shame teachers. When the Ministry of Education decided to go public with these results, they should have also reported the conditions under which these tests were given. I must also point out that some teachers that took the test also had it in their posses-

sion before hand as they were markers of the PSE last year. However, even if a teacher made perfect scores on the tests, that does not mean that they are capable of imparting such knowledge to our students.


Sitting the exams did nothing more for me than to make me be aware of how my students must feel when they go to sit it; why some of them probably do poorly as opposed to the work they produce in the classroom. Some people just cannot produce what they are supposed to under examination conditions. Even though the PSE has its uses, I have never been one to advocate the use of standardized test and I don't think I ever will. Anyone in education would know that not all children are visual learner, and so the students who would comprehend better by hearing are at a disadvantage when they sit the PSE. It there an audio cassette with the examination for such students?

I must state at this point that I did attend the first follow up session and found


it to be a waste of my time for most of that day. I decided not to attend the others as I have better use of my time. The very first workshop that was done was good because we were better informed of what the examiners are looking for on the PSE. For example, that the children should introduce the setting and characters in the first paragraph of their stories, which I do not fully support.

Many times, in many schools, the Middle Division of the school suffers because principals would normally put the "stronger" teachers in the Infant and Upper Divisions. A Standard Six teacher inherits all that the teachers before did or failed to do with the students coming into his / her class. They are expected to do some miracles with those students who are not at the expected level in about seven months. This is near impossible when you have a class of thirty-five, sometimes more.

It is my firm belief that we have

(Please Turn To Page 8) 

# An Evil Eye Opens Up Again

 (Continued From Page 5)

"In a first delivery, according to DIA, 35,000 machines were sent to Brazil."

A statement from the public ministry of Paran\* in Brazil says "the accusation...has been revived in 2004 in a new inquest on money laundering" linked with gaming. In Panama, Mottley found himself stripped of his position in 2000, three years after the case landed on his desk. Sossa accused him of unlawfully passing classified information to Italian authorities. Mottley was exonerated later.

Oranges filed three lawsuits, one before the Panamanian Supreme Court against the Panamanian state, a second before the Human Rights Commission of the Organisation of the American Status (OAS), also against the Republic of Panama, and the third before the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights of the United Nations against the Republic of Italy. Only the first continues today. The suit was admitted in February 2004.

IPS tried to talk with Sossa; the phone calls were abruptly cut. Oranges spoke through his Panamanian lawyer Luis Vásquez to La Prensa, and reiterated his claims of innocence. Mottley says that in at least one other prominent instance Sossa had refused to investigate strong evidence of wrongdoing.

Starting in 1996, Panama had received several requests from authorities in the United States, Germany and Chile to investigate Marc M. Harris, a U.S. financier based in Panama. Some of the requests indicated that Harris appeared to be providing financial services to convicted narco-traffickers. La Prensa published documents proving this, and also that fraudsters and money launderers were among Harris's clients. Only, it was double deception: Harris refused to return their money, and the

clients could not resort to the authorities they were avoiding in the first place.

A U.S. Senate report issued in 2001 said Harris had been behind a number of international banking, investment and securities frauds. Harris fled to Nicaragua, but was expelled in 2003 and brought to justice in Miami. On May 21 last year he was sentenced to 17 years in prison and ordered to pay a 26 million dollar fine following conviction on 16 counts of money laundering, tax evasion and conspiracy to defraud the U.S. government.

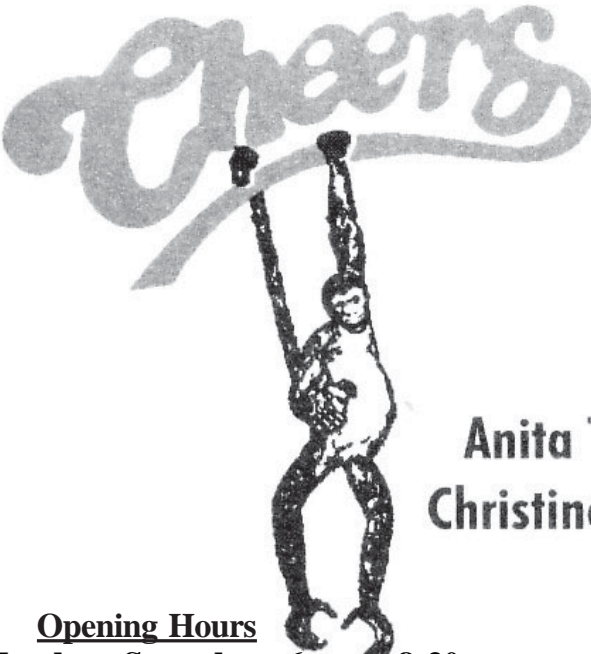
La Prensa also reported Sossa's failure to investigate Harris. The attorney-general brought criminal defamation charges against several of the daily's journalists. He was unsuccessful. Some of the charges were rejected by the judge and others just expired.

The commission for the prevention,

control and eradication of drugs, narco-trafficking and money laundering of the Panamanian parliament had earlier requested investigation of Sossa's role by a special prosecutor in the Malocchio and Harris cases in 2000.

The prosecutor, Alma Montenegro de Fletcher, who also has left office recently, exonerated Sossa the same year. But in her final statement she indicated that the attorney-general had neglected his duty and showed "unacceptable" conduct in a civil servant.

**About the Author: Miren Gutiérrez is IPS Editor in Chief. Formerly Business Editor at La Prensa, she was part of the paper's investigative unit. This article, published in February of 2005, was written with the cooperation of Mónica Palm, editor at La Prensa in Panama.**



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Your weekly

HOROSCOPE

**ARIES** (Mar. 21- April 20)

Take matters in hand when it comes to dealing with clients or colleagues. This is a great day to get out and enjoy an entertaining evening with friends or lovers. You may find yourself in the midst of a pretty good deal. You will reach the most people if you speak out at an organizational function. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

**TAURUS** (Apr. 21- may 21)

You may want to sign up for courses that will encourage you to have more confidence in yourself. Misunderstandings could cause confusion and upset. You're intuitive this week; however, this attribute could get you in trouble if you tactlessly say what you think. Be prepared to make changes to your personal documents. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

**GEMINI** (May 22-June 21)

Art investment will pay big dividends in the long term. Family outings will make you feel secure and happy. Your determination and sheer desire to do your own thing will be successful. You should follow through on educational endeavors you have wanted to pursue for some time. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

**CANCER** (June 22-July 22) You can expect changes in your financial situation as well as in your status. Lack of funds may add stress to your already uncertain situation. Be careful not to let friends or peers make you look bad. You should visit a friend or relative who hasn't been well. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

**LEO** (July 23-Aug 22)

Elders may get you going this week. A second chance will result in good work. Exercise your talents and present your ideas to groups you think you can contribute to. Pleasure trips will be a form of healing for your emotional state of mind. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

**VIRGO** (Aug. 23 -Sept. 23)

You should spend your day trying to get things completed at work. It's a favorable time for real estate, investments, and moneymaking opportunities to be successful. Chances to express your ideas and beliefs can bring popularity as long as you're not arrogant. Don't neglect these problems; deal with them once and for all, then move on to more pleasurable tasks. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

**LIBRA** (Sept. 24 -Oct. 23)

If you're already in a relationship, use this added energy passionately. Secret affairs will only lead to deception. Money may slip through your fingers. You will have a great day if you just say what you feel. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

**SCORPIO** (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)

Problems with colleagues are likely. Ask family members for help and you will be able to complete the projects more quickly. They will not have the patience to wait for you to complete things that they've asked you to do. Your professional attitude will not go unnoticed. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

**SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 23 -Dec. 21)

Unforeseen changes in your location are

MOE goofed ...

➡ (Continued From Page 7)  
stopped producing quality teachers when the Belize Teachers' College became a part of the University of Belize. Under the Belize Teachers' College, the "climate" was different and all efforts were concentrated on only teacher training and acquiring pedagogical skills. Teachers were together at the same campus for the whole day. This led to a lot of exchanging of ideas, concerns and possible solutions and you interacted with each other. Lecturers were concerned only with teacher training and did not have to be teaching other course in other fields of study. This climate cannot exist in other institution when there are other courses that also needs attention.

I hope that one of these days we will wake up and do the right thing - stop focusing on the PSE results and start focusing on a TEACHERS' TRAINING COLLEGE. Even though some people might think we are stepping backwards if we were to re-open the

Belize Teachers' Training College, I do not hesitate to disagree with them. I think that it was at the point when the 2 + 1 training was scrapped that we started to lose our footing on education in this country. There were people who went into the 2 + 1 training, and because it gave them a true value of what a teacher should be, that they removed themselves from the teaching profession. The institution, at the time, served to keep those persons who would make good and dedicated teachers while making those who thought that teaching was an easy job, change their minds. We must also bear in mind that not everything that works in industrialized countries will work for us. So let stop copying everything that we read or hear about. Please, it is time to bring back good, sound teacher training in an institution which caters ONLY to teacher training.

*About the author: Thomas Oliver is a Standard Six Teacher at the Burrell Boom Methodist School.*

apparent. Visit friends or relatives you rarely see. You are best to ask questions if you aren't certain about issues that are confronting you. Loved ones may be annoyed if they feel restricted. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

**CAPRICORN** (Dec 22.- Jan. 20)

Sign up for courses or join fitness clubs. Try to put your money away for a rainy day. Get thinking about prolonging longevity. Driving too fast or double parking will result in difficulties with officials. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

**AQUARIUS** (Jan. 21 -Feb. 19)

Get busy trying to make more money. You should get out and enjoy social events where you are likely to meet new poten-

tial mates; however, don't over spend. Business partnerships should turn out to be quite lucrative. Travel for business will be advantageous. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

**PISCES** (Feb. 20-Mar. 20)

You'd be wise to control your spending so your debts don't get out of hand. Brunch, a long walk, or a quiet dinner will secure your position in the relationship. Try to deal with the problems of those less fortunate; however, don't allow them to make unreasonable demands. Don't get depressed, get busy. You can accomplish a lot if you're willing to put in a little extra time. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



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FOR

GOOD FOOD

with Anthony Hunt

THE OLD SALTY DOG

Euphrates Avenue • Belize City

Simple and straight to the point. Great location. Great appearance. Great atmosphere. Half the stuff on the menu not available. But, what was in stock was very good. I had been wanting to try this place for several months, as the placard outside announcing the meal of the day was always so tempting. We went in with Lasagna in mind, but waitress told us "only enough for one" tried to order several other items but were told that they "no ga non tiday". However, the boil-up and the rice-n-beans with stew beef that they did have were very good. I would even venture to say that the beef itself was some of the best I have had around town. The tambran juice was also very good. So, maybe we caught them on an off day, as the location is too good to disappoint, but yes I would go back, if for the beef alone.



# Some Thoughts on BTB Advertising Policy

**By: Ray Auxilou**

Someone on the online debating list serve mentioned that most of the Belize Tourist Board advertising budget is spent on a few expensive high end hotels. Such an idea startled me, with the reversal of empirical evidence of tourism development over the past forty five years in Belize.

I can see where it might come about, from young civil service people who have not watched the business grow and experienced the joys and difficulties of applying their own risk capital in tourism development over decades. Such an idea that investing in advertising to support the few top hotel earners in the tourist industry is obviously a choice that a bureaucrat concentrating on highest tax revenues earned for the government might make.

As a strategy to boost tourism numbers, however, the idea of concentrating the majority of advertising budget on high end hotels would be totally wrong, empirical evidence and experience shows over four decades in Belize. Do we go by academic theory, or by the evidence? Here is the difference between practical hands on knowledge and that by theoretical academics.

What attracts tourists to Belize fluctuates and is always driven by market demand. Tourism and even high end tourism hotels succeed, only if advertising is spent by government departments with this responsibility on your small tourist operator offerings. These are the things that attract tourists. You advertise your small tourist mom and pop operations with articles in the international media, that include the human interest element and the eventual effect is to fill those big hotels, as spillover. Without the small tourist operations, you have no industry, or will lose what you have.

In my lifetime of experience, you look after the small individual, doing things like manatee tours, macaw colorful parrot watching, the kite windsurfers, the Ragamuffin Sailing Tours, etc. You concentrate your advertising on the exotic, the small person, the David versus Goliath competition. That is what brings increases in your tourism overnight visitor statistics. You advertise the small entrepreneur with a hostel, a guest house and that sort of thing. For comparison: if you concentrate on saving pennies and nickels in your personal life, you will eventually be rich. If you concentrate on your small tourism places, you will expand the industry to bring new investment into the country for new bigger hotels.

If the debate on the list serve is true, then BTB have their investment policy reversed. There are some basics to advertising Belize. You advertise adventure, the small family owned operator

struggling against the giant hotel corporations, you spend money keeping the San Pedro and Caye Caulker front beaches filled with sand and attractive. You place small strategic one and two inch cheaper classified ads in all the sports magazines, from the North American Backpacking magazine, to Mountain Bike magazine, to Hiking Trails magazines, to Windsurfing magazines, to Gold Prospector magazine, Fishing magazines, to Archeology magazines, in Sailing and Cruising magazines, in Scuba magazines, in car racing magazines, in private small plane ultra light and glider magazines like Soaring and you find these equivalents in the European and Asian markets with their local languages and just fill the classified ad sections of all sorts of magazines giving entrepreneur, or activity niche someplace in Belize as destinations and places to go, to experience these exotic exciting things. Two hundred dollars per magazine issue, perhaps three hundred magazines, how hard can that be?

Remember, while your big hotel customer is old and rich, in their minds they are still young and wish to relive their youth. They may not get past the swimming pool with rum and coke drink in hand, but they will come not for a big hotel, but for the idea, that if they wanted they could do those physical things. It is the young and their adventures, that attract the rich older expensive tourist, who wants luxury and comforts.

Without good beaches on the islands you won't have a tourist business to

speak of either. That is a basic lesson; people come to islands for the beaches. They may not use the beach, but if you don't have one, your tourist business will die. The asset is photogenic, sort of the romantic idea of the Caribbean, sand and coconut trees. Old rich folks may do no more than look out the window at young people playing volleyball on the beach, but if you don't have those young physically fit people, you won't get the old rich tourist either. Tourism is a psychological game and how you advertise is key. You are selling image. Your typical tourist lives in a crowded city, full of concrete tall canyons and lives in a cave called an apartment, or a room. They yearn spiritually for the outdoors, to commune with nature and meet physical challenges of the outdoors. This is what you sell in Belize. The idea of

what is real from older days in an old fashioned sense, and advertising for young people in the small operator and low budget hostel environment that they can afford, is where you need to BEST spend your advertising dollar as a nation. You must sell the exotic and the physical and nature. The rich will follow the young adventurers and dream of what was once, that they have left behind in their advancing years.

There are now six low budget hostels in Belize. One on San Pedro, three on Caye Caulker, two in Western Cayo District. Look after your small guys BTB, the big hotel investments and customers with the money will follow. Advertise to attract the yuppies in their twenties and the old and rich will follow and want those big hotels.

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# Belize retirement: The Dream, and a few Nightmares

## A report from the frontlines

**By: Delfina Mitchell**

Greetings to all from Belize!

Four months ago, my husband Mitch, my mom, our three dogs, Chief, Gunny, and DOG, our cat George, and I, left Florida to start our new adventure. It rained every day for the first three months. I swear, every single day! It was hot and muggy, and many days and nights it was continuous rain.

We live about 12 miles outside Belize City in a village call Ladyville. The area we live is just being developed, hence there are acres and acres of land with a neighbor here and there. Mitch, my Mom and I all refer to it as "back-a-bush".

Every day is a new adventure for us as well as the animals.

### Horsing around

Since our property is not yet fenced, horses come walking through, eating the grass our sticking their heads into veranda to see what is going on. The dogs would go wild barking every time they saw the horses, day or night. - they had never seen horses before.

This went on for about six weeks, then one day we heard the horses chomping through but the dogs never budged from their resting spot. The horses were old news.

### Friendly neighbors

David, our neighbor, is a blessing. He returned to Belize to chill out about seven years ago after he retired from the US army. He understands the kind of limbo we are in and is a wealth of information and advice on living in Belize. He raises ducks, chicken and turkeys in his back yard.

A small lake runs between our property, and David's ducks would float by or his chicken and turkeys would wander over and Chief and Gunny would chase them. One morning about 3 am, I woke to hear this strange noise, and found Chief had brought back one of David's ducks. It was fluttering around, sounding like its neck was crushed.

So we're out in the rain with a half dead duck making a lot of noise and wondering how David was going to react to our dog getting his duck. I

tell Mitch we needed to put him out of its misery, to use a cement block or machete but he says that's mean and he wasn't going to do it. In the end we both went back to bed leaving the poor duck fighting for air. The next day we had to pay twenty dollars to David for his duck.

### Midnight visitor

My sister, Icelind, who wants desperately to live in Belize, (she hasn't been able to convince her husband on the move yet) jumps on the plane every time I call and ask her to. One night, she was up late sitting at the kitchen table when her attention was drawn to Georgie's hissing. A snake had crawled in from under the door. Mitch came out to investigate the commotion in the kitchen and found her standing on top of the kitchen table.

We suspected it was a **poisonous** coral snake, and confirmed it the morning by checking the internet. We now have weather strips on the door and if you ever happen to enter Icelind's room, you'll find a lot of garlic scattered over the floor. Someone told her garlic drives snakes away!

### On Feb 2, Chief, Gunny, and DOG died.

In Belize there are some strange delicacies. One such is a wild turkey called Curassow. A friend of my mother's brought her a piece of the "turkey." Since I was not excited about the prospect of eating the meat, I decided to cook it for the dogs. I boiled it in a stew for them and fed it to them over the dry dog food.

Unfortunately, we found out too late that Curassow is not something you feed to the dogs. The birds eat poisonous plants and the toxins are stored in the bones. When the dogs chew the bones it releases the toxins.

Thirty-four years had passed since we left Belize and my mother had forgotten about this - supposedly common knowledge. The poison affects the brain, the process was horrible, it affects the brain causes them to have painful, frightful hallucinations. The vet could do nothing for them. Symptoms started on Monday and by Friday

they died from massive seizures.

It was just horrible! We all cried like babies.

A week later we walked outside our door to find four of the most beautiful puppies. Friends are wonderful. Our friend Harry, hearing of our loss shared his new litter with us. We are now enjoying Harry, Asia, Jane, and Tribute, our newest family members!

### The fire

In Belize, they sometimes clear out the land by lighting fires to burn the bushes. On Valentine's Day, Mitch and I were relaxing enjoying this retirement life when we discovered a bush fire on the other side of the road had gotten out of control. It was threatening the home of an elderly lady who was not home at the time.

The fire was beautiful and scary, it was hot and you could hear it crackling as it ran up the trees and in the bushes. The only person home was the maid and she was just looking so scared running around outside. Mitch went to fetch David while the maid and I started filling buckets with water to put the fire out.

By the time we ran back to the house to fill the buckets and come back to the fire it had spread further. Several times I had to stop to splash water onto my face in order to get some relief from the heat. Thankfully Mitch and David came up. They both had machete in their

hands. Shortly after, other villagers who were working in the area came, they had branches they had cut from trees in their hands. I wonder what the hell they brought those for but soon got my answer. The spread out and used the branches to beat the fire out and the machete to cut more. It worked, they got the fire under control and eventually put it out.

### Truckload of trouble

I could tell you about the excitement of the 4 feet boa constrictor snake that crawled up the underside of my father's pick up truck last Friday and how I had to drive the truck to the car repair shop, so they could lift it up and get the snake out. But I'll let you use your imagination....

I'm adjusting to this retirement thing. I haven't looked for any jobs yet and am not sure if I will at this point. Sometimes I think, I have to have a purpose, I have to be in charge of something I can't just be a housewife!

But for now, I'm still getting settled in our new home and I love sleeping in. I can't say that I miss the Navy. I do miss my boys, family and friends but I have great memories and even though you may not hear from me often, know I do think of you way back here in the bush!

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# Belize mourns George Gabb



Belize's gifted giant Geroge Gabb

The National Institute of Culture and History joins the entire nation of Belize in expressing our sincere condolences to the Gabb family on the passing of Belizean patriot and cultural icon, George Seymour Gabb, M.B.E.

Even as we mourn the loss of George Gabb "the Gifted Giant", we take this opportunity to celebrate his life, accomplishments and invaluable contribution to his homeland and his people.

Having dedicated over four decades of his life to Culture and the

Arts, George Gabb made his indelible mark on Belizean culture as a playwright, poet, painter and most notably, as Belize's pre-eminent sculptor.

It will be recalled that his award-winning play "Yellowtail" was voted Best All-around Production in the Festival of Arts of May, 1966. He will be remembered as the author of many literary works including "Naked Eye: Belizean Proverbs and Philosophy". His works as a sculptor form part of Belize's National Collection, as well as private collections at home and abroad; including those of the Queen of England and the Archbishop of Canterbury. One of his most recognizable pieces, "the Sleeping Giant" (part of Belize's National Collection) has been used as a watermark on the Belize passport and is still being on Belizean paper currency.

George Gabb taught sculpture to a number of young Belizeans and for some time, spent months teaching as an artist-in-residence at universities in



George Gabb's sculpture of a tiger - man.

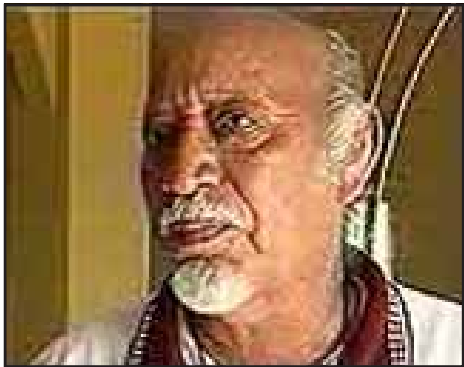
Michigan, Kentucky, Tennessee, Texas and South Carolina.

For his numerous contributions, George Seymour Gabb was made a Member of the British Empire in 1974. He was later a recipient of the Belize Arts Council's Outstanding Artist Award in August, 1998. On September 19, 2002, he received the Meritorious Service Award from the Government of Belize.--Press Release from NICH

Teen  
Toon



# TOPICAL TIDBITS



### Goodbye George Gabb

He was a great strength; a fortress of talent as a philosopher, artist painter, sculptor, poet, wood carver. He was also always an open and friendly source of common sense and good advice. He will be sorely missed.



### Guatemala City dodgy?

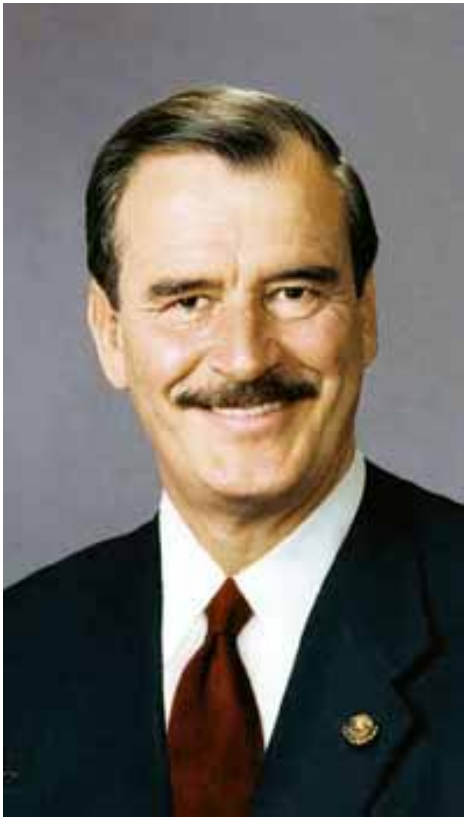
Nicaraguan president, Daniel Ortega has repeated his offer to provide temporary headquarters for the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN) due to the lack of security in Guatemala.

The situation in Nicaragua offers peace for the sessions without fears and anxieties that today exist in Guatemala, assured the Sandinista leader to board members of the regional parliament.

Ortega received the PARLACEN members in the offices of the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN) that, together with the Olof Palme Convention Center has been his office since he became the President of Nicaragua last January 10.

### Fox tells all!

MEXICO CITY — Former Mexican President Vicente Fox is telling all in a memoir that will detail his ups and



downs with world leaders, including Fidel Castro and President Bush.

Fox has signed a book deal to publish his memoir *Revolution of Hope* in October, according to a statement by Viking, a sister imprint of Penguin Press.

The book will be co-written by Fox and his friend, public-relations consultant Rob Allyn, who spent much of December and January working on the book with Fox at his ranch in central Mexico .



### Honduras renews relations with Cuba

Honduras named its first ambassador to Cuba in 45 years last week, completing the restoration of diplomatic ties with the communist-run island that were severed during the Cold War.

Ramón Elvir will be sent to Havana as Honduras ‘ ambassador.

Honduras broke off diplomatic relations with Havana in 1962, when Cuba was expelled from the Organization of American States. It renewed formal relations with the island in January 2001, but did not name an ambassador until now.



The Rio Lempa in El Salvador

In recent years, some ties between the two countries - like medical services - have increased. About 340 Cuban doctors have served in this Central American country, and around 500 Hondurans study medicine in Cuba .

### Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala unite!

El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala signed an agreement Wednesday to create the tri-national border community of Rio Lempa, near the largest reserve of water in Central America .

Mayors of the three Central American countries in nearby municipalities said actions performed together will foster efficiency of the development programs scheduled for border zones.

structure projects including: the construction of national stadiums in Dominica, St Lucia , and Grenada ; the construction of a psychiatric hospital in St Lucia; redevelopment of the Botanical Gardens in Dominica and the construction of a new block in a school nearby. China has also promised support for the development of a major highway in St Lucia , and is active in Jamaica , Guyana and Suriname.

Regional governments are ecstatic about the generosity of the Peoples Republic of China, and many have switched long held allegiances with Taiwan. Now only three countries in the English speaking Caribbean - Belize , St Kitts and Nevis , and St Vincent and



A rainbow over Roseau, the principl city in Dominica

### Chinese in Caribbean but not in Belize!

Chinese development assistance is being delivered in several visible infra-

the Grenadines , plus Haiti and the Dominican Republic - still maintain relations with Taiwan

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# Green Party Asks: Strength In Unity? Are Two Heads Better Than One?



**By: Chet Schmidt**  
**PG correspondent for**  
**INdependent Weekly**

The Toledo branch of the Belizean Green Party has some ideas that we don't see in the information from the other parties. One of the most significant and important concepts was the requirement that at least 80% of the members must vote for a motion to pass. What is the concept of democracy? That each citizen has one equal vote. The different parties put up their platforms and manifestoes as to what they think should be done and how. The responsible citizen, the electorate, should study the different parties' recommendations. To help with this the different party's candidates should hold

public meetings and debates. In a civilized society these should be focused on the issues and be conducted in a respectful atmosphere of good will. Now, what often happens, as we have seen in the past elections is one candidate will say our party believes if we go down the road that heads north we will be prosperous, but if we go down the road to the south as my opponent from the other party says, we will go broke and come to ruin. They both push for the benefits of their way and keep warning the people of how bad it will be if the other party's road is taken. Unfortunately each candidate often attacks the character of their opponent, sometimes called character assassination or negative campaigning. Now in theory when one side gets elected, maybe by a few votes, perhaps 53% to 47%, those candidates and members of the electorate who lost are supposed to join with those in the majority, and do their best to go down the road that they have been telling everyone they would never go down is definitely no question about it, the road to ruin. Their leaders are to forget all the mean and ugly things their opponents said about them and perhaps their wives

and mothers, and in the true spirit of democracy do their best to make the majority's road work. That is the theory, but is that what really happens in practice? In my observation, those who lose often stand back and watch the other head off on their own. Sometimes they even do things that will make it harder for those who go on the other road to succeed. Reading about ancient African and Indian cultures, I learned villagers kept on debating and struggling with the issues until they came to a consensus where everybody agreed as to the best way to go. This also happens in some of the most successful democracies in the most advanced nations of today like Denmark and Holland who also keep on working until they have at least a near consensus. Considering what recently happened to Mexico where they just had a very close election and are still having serious problems that continues to divide and weaken them, you have to think consensus is the key to success. The members of the Toledo branch agree that it would be far better to take the time to agree and debate the issues until a consensus or near consensus, at least 80% is achieved, with

the clear understanding by all that if the road chosen turned out not to provide what was expected, a sincere effort would be made to try the other road. This is one of the concepts put forward that we think is very important. Do you believe our desperate conditions call for radical changes? Then try this on for size. Do you believe that two heads are better than one, even if one is female and one is male? Another idea that is sure to receive some ridicule is that we have true gender equality, by having a male and female for each political office. Their first job would be to agree on what course they would take together, if they were divided on the issue, they would take it to the House of Representatives and the Senate, for them to vote on it. Again a majority should be convinced. Could these circumstances be difficult? You bet. But that's what our what our leaders are paid for-- to work hard. Please e-mail comments to [belizeangreenpartytoledo@hotmail.com](mailto:belizeangreenpartytoledo@hotmail.com), see our website at <http://belizeangreenpartytoledo.wetpaint.com> to learn more about our platform.

## Cayo independent candidate donates



*Ivan Roberts presents certificate for 7 computers to the principal of St Jude R.C. school in Camalote.*

On March 6, Ivan Roberts, who describes himself as an "Ambassador of the Universal Peace Federation" donated 7 computers to St Jude R.C. school in Camalote. He says "These are the first of 35 computers which I intend to donate to that school. I also have request from schools in Cotton Tree Village, Santa Famelia, Teakettle and other

communities. It is our intention to make sure that every school in the country of Belize has this technology available to all their students." He says he plans to ensure that not only Cayo Central schools, which are in his constituency, but all towns and villages in the Cayo district gets a fully equipped lab with a minimum of 35 computers per lab.

He says he is also working "to ensure the monopoly which prevents this country from having access to

Voice over Internet Protocol is dismantled, when I am successful in the next general election."

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# TOO WILD FOR WORDS!



*Carlos cuddles the zoo's boa constrictor, Bal Boa, as he describes the snake's natural history.*

## By Sharon Matola

THE BELIZE ZOO ANIMALS GET LOVE AND ATTENTION FROM JUNIOR ZOOKEEPER CARLOS DOMINGUEZ!

Carlos is not even 12, but even at this early age, has a great desire to fit in zookeeper duties as part of his life!

School during the week in Belmopan takes a lot out of this guy, but his homework reports are excellent, and that is the requirement for Carlos to be able to extend a helping hand at The Belize Zoo every Sunday.

Feeding monkeys, deer and birds, Carlos learns from the Belize Zookeepers proper animal management techniques, and the many factors involved in being a good zookeeper.

Carlos has learned to handle the zoo's boa constrictor, Bal Boa, and tells visitors about this gentle snake's interesting natural history.

Carlos admits, "I don't have a favourite task at the zoo. I like everything I do there, from cleaning cages, to fixing dinners for the animals and of course, getting to know them!"

Everyone at The Belize Zoo (including the animals) enjoys having Carlos around each Sunday. His bright and eager attitude is contagious! Carlos is learning a lot, and

The Belize Zoo is happy to provide a fun and interesting Sunday for this very cool guy!

It is simply TOO WILD FOR WORDS!

## Top of the class

☞ (Continued From Page 4)

tice, manage her time on the exam, focus, focus, focus.... They have been admonishing her, guiding her, cheering her on.

What do we tell her now?

If this is an example of how the current Ministry treats its educators and students, no wonder our children are failing. No wonder our teachers are demoralized, underpaid and over worked while the administrators are out of touch, overpaid and under worked.

Whatever the reason behind the announcement, it backfired, big time. The Minister himself is now in the dunce chair with some even suggesting he, perhaps the entire cabinet, should take the test and have the results made public.

The ministry is now faced with the very real possibility that the professional men and women it counts on to invigilate and grade this exam, will boycott this year and are questioning its very relevance.

In terms of public relations, right now the ministry has an "F" for foresight and sensitivity.

The Minister says he is disappointed in the teachers.

Clearly they are disappointed in him.

I will stand with our teachers on this one, even if it affects my own child. I will side with them because I respect them and their efforts. Because I remember those teachers at Teacher's College who left newborn babies in PG with relatives, or commuted several hours every day by bus from Corozal, Orange Walk, Cayo and Dangriga because they were told they needed to be certified. I will side with them because these women, and a handful of men, who turn up for class each day, often take money out of their own pockets to feed our children, buy supplies, counsel them when they are in trouble or have difficulties at home, take assignments in communities so many of us would give up on before we even got there. They keep working, teaching our nation's children, year in and year out, because it is what they have been called to do. With little thanks from the parents, and even less from their Ministry or the churches.

For me, and many Belizeans, the teacher's willingness to stand up and say "No More," is the true test of their intelligence. The yardstick by which we should all be measured.

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# 10th La Ruta Maya River Challenge - new record



Armin Lopez, Amado & Rudy Cruz of the Belize Bank team paddled to a record breaking finish to win La Ruta Maya River Challenge for the 3rd consecutive year.



The Cruz sisters of Esperanza Village won the female category for the 2nd year running.

## Belize honors Baron Bliss



Governor General Sir Colville Young lays a wreath on the grave, at Monday's ceremonies honouring of Belize's greatest benefactor Baron Edward Victor Ernest Bliss.

## Independents contest Ladyville Village Council

➡ (Continued From Page 1)

Reginald Williams.

Odessa Gibson is a former Chairlady of Rockstone Pond and Carolee Hecker has worked campaigns before for other candidates but this is the first time she has run herself.

Hecker says not only is their team having to introduce themselves during house to house visits, they are having to inform people there is an election on April 1<sup>st</sup>. "A lot of people are not even aware there is a Village Council Election."

This may be due to a lack of publicity from the Ministry of Local Government and also the Elections and Boundaries Commission.

The team says some people have got-

ten very dependent on the politics of money. Turton says some Ladyvillians have told them outright, "If you don't have money, don't even come to my house." She says they are not going to pay anyone to vote and want to help instill pride in the community. "Just because you are poor, does not mean you have to live in a dirty area or not keep up your yard."

This is the second time a group of independents is campaigning in Ladyville. In the elections of 2001 group called the "Independent Seven," lead by Michael Hutchison, almost took the council, losing the Chairmanship to the PUP by only two votes.

## Letters to the Editor

➡ (Continued From Page 2)

a blanket unqualified condemnation sometimes seen in some of the editorial-like articles.

I wish to close now with part of a speech from the greatest American orator of modern times.

"We must forever conduct our struggle on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new military which has engulfed the negro community must not lead us to

distrust all white people, for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably bound to our freedom. **We cannot walk alone.**"

Martin Luther King Jr.  
August 28, 1963.

May God bless Belize and the United States.

Respectfully yours,

Rudolph A. Bowman  
Dangrigan Belizean  
Coloradoan American



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