

# The Independent

*Reformer* *for the People*

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## PUP loses Ladyville

The heart of Ladyville was beating strongly on Sunday, April 1st, for the Village Council elections. These elections unlike the nationals are not at the whim & fancy of the Prime Minister but called every three years by the Ministry of Government responsible for them.

At press time, the UDP candidate for Chairman, Luciano Cho had officially won with approximately 50% of the vote, while the PUP and Independent slate were neck and neck with 26% and 24% respectively. Councillor votes had not yet been counted.

The results mirror the latest UB poll percentage-wise showing a steep decline in the popularity of the People's United Party and the increase in public support for Independent or "third" parties. Ladyville is an important Village simply because it's the largest village and some say because its Ralph Fonseca's old constituency. That very powerful minister counts Ladyville as his home turf although he's rarely seen in the area. However, the three candidates wanting his seat were very visible election day. Dr. Cardo even had a permanent booth.

There were three teams vying for of-



*Voters lined up out into the street and around the corner to place their votes on Sunday.*

fice. A PUP, UDP, and an independent

slate led by the lady Mrs. Thurton. She was supported by family and friends as well as members of the Commoners organization.

The PUP and UDP slates had the obvious strong support of their respective party machineries. Monies were being spent that is normally unheard of for Village Councils: TV ads, radio spots, newspaper ads, t-shirts, refreshments for the troops, and some say even a little grease for the voters but we could get the picture of the 100-150 dollars being doled out.

Mass party troops were transported in mostly from Belize City and in some instances did cause a bit of excitement. There were a couple of instances with banners being torn down by PUP sympathetic imports but all in all a quite non-confrontational event. Very civil, lots of determination on all sides. No need for the almost excessive show of police power. No BDF or ADU, although the latter could have had a field day.

For the Government side, numerous ministers & their families, senators, standard bearers, standard bearer hopefuls, and just families of a number of high ranking PUP ministers. Quite a (Please Turn To Page 16)



*Commoners representatives urge residents to vote Independent.*

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## Village Council politricks

Dear Editor,

The first weekend of Village Council Elections, it goes like this: Mark Espat’s Ministry of National Development through the Ministry of Rural Development is responsible for conducting Village Council Elections. Don’t wait on the E&B to update their website because the information is actually handled by the MND. They should be sending out a release shortly. Elections are spread out over the next six weeks (not two) with a break for the Easter holidays.

The government came up with the schedule for elections but the strategy failed them miserably the first week. The strategy was to schedule all those known DIE HARD PUP villages in the first two week to give the impression that the PUP was very much alive and doing well and set the stage for other villages to follow. Worse case scenario should have given them an 85% victory but they were looking forward more towards a 95 to 100% victory in all

these PUP villages.

In Cayo, for example Esperanza Village, a known UDP area, was placed in the starting line up but this was done because the PUP knew that there were two candidates running for the UDP and so with the UDP votes splitting between these two candidates, they were of the opinion that their candidate could have slipped through the crack thereby giving them a real victory to claim. As it turned out, both UDP candidates defeated the PUP candidate and his three colleagues because they could not even come up with a full slate of six councilor candidates in Esperanza.

In the overall scenario, it turned out that they took a licking and are now claiming victory with 60%. Even if we are to believe them, a 60% success rate is a terrible blow for a party that was expecting as much as 95 - 100% with all its die hard villages in the starting line up.

One can only imagine what will happen when all those known UDP villages begin to kick in. Like for example in those UDP villages where the PUP continues to have a hard time coming up

with candidates.

In some cases the Prime Minister himself has to come into these villages to get a slate together. While the UDP, on the other hand is faced with having to go to village council conventions because there are just too many candidates offering themselves as UDP candidates, as in the case with Bullet Tree Village where there were four persons in the convention for Chairman and 14 for councilors.

And as mentioned previously, there is the case in Esperanza Village just this week, where there were two UDP slates and they still defeated the PUP slate which ran with only three councilors so although the UDP votes were split among two candidates for Chariman, the PUP candidate still came in dead last.

The renewed PUP strategy I am told, is that by that time the UDP villages start going to the polls, they should have successfully convinced the people that village council elections should be kept free for partisan politics

Alberto August,  
STAR, Publisher

## Ripping off our Advertisers

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# Handouts on Handyside Street



**By: Karla Heusner Vernon**

“Are they crazy?” I thought to myself. “Taking money out like that in a neighborhood like this?” A neighborhood, like so many Belizean neighborhoods, once respectable, even upper class but now decaying and depressing.

I had been driving by when I saw the man taking a roll of US money out of his pocket, peel off a few bills and give it to his female companion. They were obviously tourists, from their pale complexions, matching khaki outfits and fanny packs. No doubt they were off one of the cruise ships in port, there were swarms of visitors that day in Belize City.

I thought about pulling over to caution them about flashing money around, letting them know they could be robbed, or hurt or both.

As I was trying to decide what to do, the woman suddenly dashed across the street in front of my car and started waving almost frantically at a woman on the verandah of the lower flat of a dilapidated house. “For the little girl...” I heard her say.

I saw a tiny child, probably no older than three, standing there. Her dress was in tatters, her face smudged with dirt and mucus and her hair in disarray. She looked, in short, just like one of

those Third World orphans on Save the Children Fund commercials.

I could see why the tourist felt compelled to give the Hispanic woman with wild, unkempt hair standing next to the little girl. I felt like scooping her up myself and taking her home to give her a bath, a decent meal. She looked totally neglected, possibly even abused. Frankly, so did the woman.

Then I shook myself. How do I know

**Sadly, in so many ways, our city is becoming a caricature of itself, an object of ridicule, or revulsion, or pity for visitors.**

that? Maybe the girl has just been running around evading all attempts to bathe her and blow her nose. Kids do that. Run around looking like ragamuffins even when their parents are trying to keep them neat and tidy. Kids from all kinds of socio-economic backgrounds don't like to take a bath. Maybe if she weren't standing in front of this brukup house she wouldn't look so desperate... so sad.

But as I drove off, I had to wonder what would happen after what had just happened. Would the woman, presumably her mother, actually spend the money on food or clothing for this kid? Would she hurry to bathe the child, embarrassed, mortified even, that some stranger thought she was dirt poor?

Or would she now stand in front of her house every cruise ship day, put her child on display hoping more kind hearted tourists would fork over money for the child's welfare? Then spend it on herself?

Was a vicious cycle now beginning in which the child might indeed actually be

abused, even pushed into prostitution when she gets older?

It's not farfetched. I found out how near-fetched it is two days later when a man told me he had to call police because a tourist from one of the ships was having sex with a minor girl right out in the open-- on the stage of the Memorial Park! Stories abound of taxi drivers regularly procuring Belizean young ladies for visiting foreigners want-

ing a little action in the middle of the morning and afternoon. This is not just anecdotal, its documented by the agencies dealing with youths in this country, a form of sex tourism and exploitation. I have seen the taxis myself pulling into the brothel on the northern highway and the men getting out in broad daylight. The Love Boat indeed.

Drugs are another problem. How often do we hear of tourists busted with drugs in their fanny packs or even stuffed up their fannies? A Belizean who works in the Fort Area told me he was walking through an alley between Memorial Park and Eyre Street when he met a couple of tourists smoking crack! Right in the alley.

Now, I suppose some will ask why foreigners should be prohibited from enjoying crack in our alley ways when so many Belizeans enjoy it there on a regular basis... or if I never read old historical accounts of the shenanigans visitors to Belize used to get up to in the seafaring days of old. Why these things are just part of local hospitality tradi-

tion, right?

And its not all the visitors, heck no. Most of them are busy looking for frivolous little trinkets and taking photos of intriguing sights they can't get back home like open drains, stray dogs and half starved horses pulling the fattest Americans their owner can attract in carriages bedecked with plastic flowers and garish yards of material. If they are lucky, they can capture the moment the poor animal collapses in exhaustion with their video cameras.

Sadly, in so many ways, our city is becoming a caricature of itself, an object of ridicule, or revulsion, or pity for visitors. I am sure they return home full of stories of being followed around by haunted looking drug addicts not taking no for an answer, of taxis that blow their horns loudly at them when they walk incorrectly down the Swing Bridge, or merchants who swindled them out of US cash by given them incorrect amounts of Belizean change.

For sure, at least one woman is at this moment still telling her relatives about the dire poverty in Belize, conditions so bad, so shocking she could not help but take some of her own vacation money and hand it over to help one little girl living in an inhuman ghetto, on a street that runs right off the fancy Tourism Village. “We have so much you know, you really don't appreciate it until you go to these Third World countries, do you? Frankly I don't know if I could ever go back. It just breaks your heart...”

It breaks our hearts too to see all the money coming in on the ships but not being left--in the right way--in our neighborhoods. And visitors thinking we have no pride, no dignity, no resources of our own.

## FACTS OR TRUTH?

## What is happening in our PUP government?

**By: Ray Auxillou**

I can't get decent radio stations out West where I live, so I never listen to the radio. We get the tv news periodically, but not regularly as we only hit on them by chance, not by any scheduled time. Most of our entertaining scandal information comes from the newspapers. This past week the news was kind of scarce.

A very nice article on a shoe repair man and his life. I liked that! Interesting article or ad, on BTL giving FREE INTERNET access to some child care facility. I liked that. But it brought to mind the BTL television ad where the young man keeps saying to his peer group teenagers that 25 cents a minute to talk to your friends is CHEAP! I have to laugh at that bald faced lie!

Yet the newspapers of the political party organs prove that telling lies works on the general public. I certainly would say 2 cents a minute for BTL conversations would be cheap and 5 cents a minute would be fair, BUT 25 cents a minute? Gimme a break! That's highway robbery without a gun!

Of course BTL took over the GOVERNMENT GUARANTEED INTELCO losses and we all remember the PM running around like a chicken with his head cut off for over three years trying to get the alleged INTELCO swindles buried to avoid any public exposure and possible prosecutions by any new political party taking over the government in the future.

The emphasis in the scandal sheets on the DFC and Social Security are the

only scandals available to the media, but INTELCO was where the real thieving took place from what I have read of this novella so far. And Ashcroft through BTL, finally agreed to take over INTELCO and bury them, for what price is what I wonder?

Then this week there was the new tie in, in the *Amandala* newspaper about some holding Panamanian shell company, that Michael Ashcroft and the Panamanian Vice President and Foreign Minister or something were stockholders? Given that Fonseca in past newspapers has been quoted to be heavily involved in Panamanian politics and shell companies. That kind of lumps Ashcroft, Fonseca, Panamanian politicians, shell companies in Panama and probably our money carrying mule CAL, smuggling

foreign exchange to Panama on our Belizean diplomatic passport in the tens of millions of dollars, with these foreign exchange bandits. Nobody knows yet and the Money Laundering Unit in Belmopan were quoted as evasive in another article when a reporter enquired as to progress on illegal parallel market trading.

They can't do anything anyway as they obviously can be inferred as under the control of one of the alleged players, as local Cabinet Minister in charge of that very thing. They haven't been prosecuted yet, or fined in court! The assumption to me, an ordinary reader, was that a group of individuals in our government and their friends were ripping off our Belize teenagers market with (Please Turn To Page 13)



# How Long Will We Continue to Blame Colonialism?

**By: Mario Lara**

It’s an old cliché that every cloud has a silver lining. The series of political scandals that have plagued the nation of Belize recently is one such dark cloud. But the rude awakening effect that these scandals have on the people is in fact a silver lining. This is evidenced by the number of independent candidates and third parties who have added their voices to the national debate about the political future of Belize. Although they have a long way to go, they are already contributing in a positive way by inspiring ordinary Belizeans like myself to really stop and question the way we govern ourselves and to imagine what Belize could be, if we only we had the conviction to embark upon a grand experiment of what it truly means to be independent.

For too long, we have habitually blamed our problems with our politics and our way of life on colonialism. We act as if we are powerless to rid ourselves of the dysfunctional parliamentary system of government and ill crafted constitution we inherited from our European forefathers. But, perhaps the latest round of political scandals involving waste, greed, incompetence and corruption, delivered by the current system of government, will provide the impetus for us Belizeans to rid ourselves

of this mental slavery that colonialism has wrought upon us and to imagine a new set of possibilities and a new vision for Belize.

Think about it. Belizeans are but a few thousand people among the billions who populate this planet. And yet, we collectively lay claim to one of the most beautiful and bountiful specks of land on Earth. Tiny as Belize may be, compare our ratio of people to land to any other nation and you’ll see that we are far better off than most. Perhaps we don’t have the most productive and fertile lands nor the most tolerable of climates; but no one can argue that what we have isn’t good. Indeed, most would easily agree that what we have is great – a choice piece of real estate.

So then why should we continue to make a mess of how we govern, administer, and make a living from this beautiful jewel of ours? Why should a few continue to enjoy a disproportionate share of the shade that Belize has to offer, while a majority is left to labor under the hot sun? This is what our current system of government delivers. But what is stopping us from fashioning a system of government for ourselves that ensures the wealth of Belize is shared more equitably? What is stopping us from giving true meaning to our independent status?

Suppose we suspended the belief that the parliamentary system of government is some sort of sacred cow and instead of merely tinkering with the system, we decided to boldly but intelligently experiment with different forms of government? Suppose we elected a council of District Supervisors and a National President to replace the Prime Minister and his Cabinet. Imagine also that we elected a set of leaders who had a shared vision for the future that says quality of life in Belize is intertwined with preserving and respecting the environment in a truly sustainable way – not merely declaring swaths of land as nature reserves while allowing polluting industries to operate unregulated in other areas of the country. What if these visionary leaders formulated national policy by consulting with the people and truly representing their interests, rather than simply manipulating a mob during elections time by making promises to them of housing schemes that only end up serving to enrich an elite and connected few while being paid for by the masses?

What if we were more careful and selective about which aspects of modernization we pursued as a nation so that we took time to ensure that whatever national programs we embarked upon were fully consistent with our vision of

Belize? Programs that place a high value on preserving the pristine environment (one of our greatest assets) and consistent, as well, with our culture and way of life which values people above materialism - so that every Belizean would be afforded a greater chance at a dignified way of life rather than having to beg for handouts. And what if administrative authority and responsibility were delegated to the district, towns, and villages so that local leaders no longer have to lobby ministers for resources but are instead truly supported and provided oversight by the national government so that they are able to direct their affairs in a true spirit of partnership. Wouldn’t this be an even better form of checks and balance than an elected senate within the current dysfunctional structure?

How long will we continue to blame colonialism? Indeed, the future of Belize can be much better if we dare to rid ourselves of our mental slavery and truly embrace our independence by seeking out news ways by which to govern and administer our jewel. I feel that out of the scandals a worthwhile national debate has begun and I am optimistic about the future. Are you?

Readers, if you liked this article you may send comments to Mario Lara at: [cowfootsoup@yahoo.com](mailto:cowfootsoup@yahoo.com)

Belize City

PUP Government Working

On Wednesday, 28th March 2007 The Ministry of National Development, Investment and Culture held a ground breaking ceremony for the construction of a new school building at Wesley College in Belize City,

The school building project will be funded by the Government of Belize through the Commonwealth Debt Initiative programme with counterpart funding provided by the community through their contribution of in-kind labour. The project will be implemented by the Social Investment Fund on behalf of the Government of Belize.

The project consists of the replacement of a dilapidated two storey wooden structure with a five classroom building and bathrooms. The new building will be of reinforced concrete and will measure 30 feet wide, including a 5 foot verandah, and 108 feet by 78 feet long in the form of an "L" shape. The building will utilize folding partition walls to allow three of the classrooms to be used as an auditorium. The building will be designed to function as a three story building in the future, and to withstand up to category 5 hurricane storms. All exterior doors will be solid timber doors and the windows will be aluminum louvered with security grills. Provisions for electrical installation will be made along with provision of appropriate waste disposal systems for the sanitary block services.

This project will benefit 729 students and 51 teachers and staff.

Guest speakers at the event were the Honourable Mark Espat, Minister of National Development, Investment and Culture and Albert Division Area Representative, and Mr. Hugh O'Brien, Chairperson of the Social Investment Fund.

Ministry of National Development Investment & Culture

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# Cuban refugees safe in Belize

Cayman Net News, March 28, 2007

The nine Cuban refugees who left George Town harbour on 5 March have arrived safely at the Tranquility Bay Resort in Belize.

In an e-mail to Cayman Net News dated 24 March, a local resident passed on the good news and brief details of their journey.

Two days after leaving the Cayman Islands the boat's engine broke down and they drifted in bad weather for three days. On 10 March they arrived near the Tranquility Bay Resort, which is located 14 miles north of San Pedro on Ambergris Caye.

All the seven men and two women made the trip safely. Because their boat was now unusable, six men and one of the women continued their journey on foot, heading towards Mexico.

One couple still remains in Belize, although they are apparently undecided on what path to take but are said to be concerned about their safety and worried that the police



*The Cuban refugees left Grand Cayman on 5 March.*

might deport them back to Cuba.

According to their account of the journey, it was a nightmare. They say the weather after they left Grand Cayman was terrible and both thank God

that they are still alive.

Attached to the e-mail was a photograph on one of the couples, taken after their safe arrival in Belize.

After the refugees left, many people

on Grand Cayman offered prayers for their safe passage. When the news was received one of them said simply, "I am so happy. My prayers were answered."

## Cayo high school student "Do di Rait Thing"



*Police Superintendent Yolanda Murray & Police Press Officer Michael Reid present award to Cynthia Perdomo, accompanied by Eden School Principal Erodito Pineda.*

Press Release--The Belize Police Force has recognized a student from the *Eden Seventh Day Adventist High School* from Santa Elena Town in the Cayo District. A high ranking member of the Police Force, Yolanda Murray, awarded prizes to Cynthia Perdomo, a second form student, for being the winner under the "Do the Right Thing" Pro-

gram. Perdomo was the winner for the month of February 2007 after a highly selective process. This academically outstanding student had reported to authorities the presence of *Cannabis* in 'fudge' after having discovered it herself. Police now report that another student had been taken seriously ill at the time after the green substance was found

in the fudge. According to Police, the originator of the fudge was eventually discovered thanks to Cynthia Perdomo. She received a T-shirt with "Du di Rait Thing!" written across it and a special document from Commissioner of Police Gerald Westby.

"It is because she cares for others that she took this bold step," stated Deputy Officer in Charge of San Ignacio Police Jeffrey Martinez, to the specially as-

sembled student body.

Superintendent Murray reported that last year, the first winner under the 'Do the Right Thing' Program had won a two year full scholarship to Saint Johns College Sixth Form along with a computer

On hand to witness the awards was Police Press Officer Michael Reid. He encouraged students to aim for the stars.

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# Menchú seeks to end Guatemala's 'darkness'

*Financial Times*

**Guatemala City--** March 28 2007

In a middle-class home in Guatemala City, and surrounded by five hyperactive puppies and a bodyguard carrying two sub-machine guns, Rigoberta Menchú is mapping out a campaign that she hopes will culminate in victory in September's presidential election.

Dressed in a traditional multicoloured dress and headband, the 48-year-old indigenous leader and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992 adopts mystical tones when she begins to describe the problems Guatemala faces. "We are in a time of darkness," she tells the FT. "It is a time of no time. We cannot see the path because it is still dark."

Such ways of seeing and describing the world are a new concept in Guatemalan politics, which, since independence in 1821, has been dominated by a small and overwhelmingly light-skinned elite.

But while these Mayan musings may not fit easily in the western mind, she believes they will be easily understood by the country's majority indigenous population and stir a traditionally apathetic segment of the country to vote for her. If she succeeds, she would become Guatemala's first indigenous president.

She would also follow the example of Evo Morales, the indigenous Bolivian head of state who, since assuming power in January 2006, has courted controversy with his brand of leftwing rhetoric and strengthened political and trade ties with Hugo Chávez, Venezuela's oil-rich president and self-proclaimed socialist.

Ms Menchú, a diminutive figure with a bright smile and a round face that hides her years, speaks fondly of Mr Morales, whom she describes as "a great brother



*Rigoberta Menchu Tum champions the rights of Guatemala's poor and indigenous peoples in her bid for the presidency of the Republic.*

and friend". "Bolivia is a country that is building its future," she says.

Yet she adopts a more cautious tone when asked whether her policy proposals could be seen as leftwing. "Concepts of left and right cannot be applied to what we stand for," she says. "I am a Mayan and that makes me different."

Some of her proposals – or at least the way she describes them – do set her apart from her competitors. For example, while Álvaro Colom, a runner-up in the 2003 presidential election and the leading centre-left candidate for the September election, advocates simple "rural development", Ms Menchú talks of promoting national ag-

riculture to cement traditional Mayan produce as the cornerstone of the nation's diet.

She also says she would open a national debate on whether Cafta, the 2004 trade agreement between Central America and the US, truly benefits Guatemala. Central America's most populous country ratified the agreement in July and while the effects of the agreement are still unclear, it has met with strong opposition in some particularly sensitive sectors, such as agriculture.

On other issues, however, Ms Menchú's proposals echo those of the mainstream opposition. She talks of the need to make government spending

more efficient and transparent, make Congress more accountable and raise Guatemala's pitiful tax take to help resolve poverty, which affects more than 50 per cent of the roughly 12 million inhabitants.

Like the other candidates, she says purging and improving the national police force is a priority. The subject has become a principal theme in Guatemala since the apparent discovery of death squads operating within the force, after four policemen were accused of slaying three congressmen from neighbouring El Salvador along with their driver last month.

The incident, which this week produced the resignation of Carlos Vielmann, the interior minister, acquired an even more sinister air when the arrested policemen were found murdered in their cells several days later.

Despite the fanfare that greeted the announcement of her candidacy, most political analysts in Guatemala believe her chances are slim. They admit her fame is a strong asset in an electoral system where personality often counts for more than policy.

But they also point out the indigenous movement is fragmented and that she does not enjoy the support from the indigenous community that she might. According to a recent poll, she only has 19 per cent of the vote compared with more than 38 per cent for Mr Colom.

But sitting in her garden, where two oil drums stand next to a pen containing yet another dog, Ms Menchú dismisses the scepticism.

She leans across and points to a thick column of ants scaling a wall and says: "That is what my campaign is about. It is a campaign of the poor but, above all, about collective action."

## PNP & VIP denounce Political Interference in Village Council Elections

*Press Release--*The People's National Party and We The People denounce political party interference in the Village Council elections and call for restraint by the PUP and UDP. Political party manipulation of Village Council elections as well as the local development process has created dependence on the party in power for jobs, favors, and loans. This has served to create division in the communities.

The PNP/WTP decries the use of party politics at the village level because it drives wedges between families and neighbors, leaving behind a hostile atmosphere long after the election is over. "We want to remove party politics from village council elections and will make this an important priority once we get into government," said Hipolito Bautista, WTP Leader, "Belizeans are

a tolerant and decent people living in a closely-knit society and deliberately divisive party politics does not represent the heart of the typical Belizean."

"We have become divisive as a nation, so beholden to our political parties that we are unable to place love of country ahead of PUP or UDP. Our patriotism is reduced to adorning party flags in our villages and receiving hand outs on election day while allowing the area reps to undermine the public service and the rule of law and promote corruption through illegal access to land and depriving local communities of their rights and patrimony," said Wil Maheia, candidate for Area Representative for Toledo East.

Once in government the PNP/WTP will respect the Village Council Act and strengthen the authority of Village Coun-

cils by decentralizing their funds and allowing VC's to collect monies directly from the village for village purposes. This will make the villages less dependent on government for their operations and development and in turn less vulnerable to party politics.

"Patriotism is love of one's country, this must include its people: all of its people. Once in government The People's National Party will work together with other leaders and individual citizens regardless of party," declared Dionicio Choc, candidate for Area Representative for Toledo West.

"Once the PNP is elected we will drop the party banners and replace them with the mantle of leadership. We will not be divided by partisanship but unified in service to the Belizean people," said Wil Maheia."

"We must keep advancing as a country and the old style spoils system where one party and its followers is castigated by the winning party is simply not the kind of political culture Belizeans want anymore," said Maheia, "that's why ordinary Belizeans must join the People's National Party and We The People to strive for a unified and stronger Belize."

"With the alliance between PNP and WTP we are building a national party, a broad and outward looking party that reflects Belize today, said Dionicio Choc.

"We believe that voters will usher in a new era of three-party politics in the next election. It is going to be a very different House of Representatives and it will be healthy for our democracy. At the end of the day, it is the Belizean people that matter, said Maheia.



# “Ills of Urbanization”



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

Juan Sak is hunting and he is caught by Warden Pop.

“Juan, this is the second time I have found you hunting here, you know it is a protected area.”

“Yes, you told me the last time we met here, and I told you my family has been hunting here for many years. My grandfather taught my father how to hunt here, and he taught me. I want to teach my son when he is old enough.”

“You had your chance Juan, I told you last time, if I caught you hunting here again, I would take you in.” “But Pop, how am I to feed my family, you know we have to hunt to make ends meet. “Yes, I do know how hard it is, but I also have to live, and the NGO who purchased this land from the government who pays me, will fire me, if they find out I am not doing my job. I gave you a chance last time, now I must report you.”

“Pop, you know I can’t afford to pay a fine or go to jail. Who will care for my wife and three young children? Ever since the hurricane destroyed our milpa, I have not been able to feed my family. I must hunt here.”

Pop said, “Your only chance is to move to Punta Gorda Town, as the others who have been forced out have done.”

“I know you love this land, but there is no other way. If I let you go again they will find out and fire me. Then another will come and he will tell you the same thing, ‘you can no longer hunt or fish here, or cut Cohune leaves for your home, or gather bush medicine. This area is protected now for the endangered plants and animals.” “What about my endangered family, why are the monkeys and trees more important than my children?” asked Sak.

“Those who have the money and power have purchased this land and you have to obey the law. If you promise me you’ll leave this area, I will let you go once again. But if you come back to hunt or gather plants again, I will report you, and you will pay the price, or you will go to jail.”

Juan Sak, returns home and moves to the outskirts of the nearest town. As town lots, and all good land is already

taken, he builds a small stick and thatch house in the swamps behind town. This takes all the money he made by selling the two pigs and few chickens he had in the village. Now he gets up early each day and goes into town to look for work.

“Are you a carpenter?”

“No.”

“Are you a mason?”

“No.”

“Are you an electrician?”

“No.”

“A plumber?”

“No.”

“Then what are you? What can your do?”

“I’m a good farmer.”

“But you are not in the bush now. You’re in town. There is no farmland here, and you have no skills. There is no work for you.”

Juan returns home and his wife asks him, “What have you bought for us to eat Juan?”

“I tried all day but, I was unable to find any work.”

“But Juan, the children are hungry, they haven’t eaten all day. The baby is crying for food..”

Meanwhile in the neighborhood shop the shopkeeper tells a townswoman, “I can’t give you any more credit, you already owe me for the last month.”

“Please Mister, you know at the end of every month my husband has a lot to chop and we always pay you. I only need, two packs of bread and one more can of corned beef, tomorrow I’ll pay you. My children are hungry and we have no money.”

The shopkeeper says “Alright, you come into the back room and give me a kiss, and I will credit you one more time.” The poor woman thinking of her

hungry children agrees.

The next day, Juan leaves home promising his wife he will bring home something, if he can’t find work or borrow money, he will steal, but he will find something, he must, he can’t stand another night of his children crying from hunger. Juan goes from house to house asking for work, but there is none. Finally he sees a house with grass in the yard that needs chopping, and he asks the woman to let him chop it for her.

But she says “No, I’m sorry, I have a man from town who chops for me every month.”

Juan, desperate, asks “How much does he charge you?”

“\$30,” says the woman.

Juan replies, “I’ll chop it for \$25.”

But the woman says no, she has a regular man. Juan says he will chop it for \$20, again the woman says no. Juan in desperation, thinking of his hungry children and wife says I will chop it for \$15. The woman, not so wealthy herself says, “If you chop it close to the ground for \$15 you can have the job.” Juan gets to work and chops the yard.

The next day, the end of the month, the townsman goes to chop the yard, but finds it already done. He asks the woman what happened? She tells him a poor Indian man came and chopped it for \$15. “I’m sorry but I’m poor also and couldn’t pass up the savings.”

The townsman is very upset and angry. “Those damn Indians have undercut me, they’re coming to town and taking the few jobs we have! What will I tell my wife? What will she tell the shopkeeper? How will I pay the bills. Where will I get credit for another month?”

While thinking this he comes upon his friend who is also out of work but

has enough money to buy a pint of rum. When he hears of his friend’s problem, he says, “Yes these people from the villages are coming to town more and more and they’re taking the jobs and spaces in the schools, and now they tell me there is no more room for my children.” Together they get drunk.

Meanwhile, Juan’s out bright and early once again offering to chop another yard for way under the going rate. He knows it’s unfair and the owner thinks he is nothing but an ignorant Indian who doesn’t know the going rate, but he is willing to play the fool, if it helps him feed his children.

By midday he has finished the lot, purchase some food and is heading home. The townsman, unable to face his wife, continued to drink the day before and never went home. Now broke and with a hangover he is on his way back, and he runs into the Indian man who his friends says is the same man who took his contract.

“Look, there is the son of a bitch who took your job, and look at the bag of food he has.” The man, egged on by his friend, approaches the Indian saying, “You took my job.” Juan says, “The woman gave it to me.”

A fight ensues, and the townsman and his friend beat the Indian and take his food. Meanwhile a householder who sees the fighting calls a police officer, when he arrives, it is the brother in-law of the townsman. “Hey, Bro-Lee, what goes on here?”

The townsman says “This Indian tried to take mi bag of goods.”The police asks the other townsmen if this is true. They back up his story and poor Juan goes to jail.

(Please Turn To Page 9)

# Nature’s Way Guesthouse

In Punta Gorda

Welcome To Nature’s Way Guesthouse

Clean, Safe, Affordable,

Central Location Sea Front View & Breeze

Single \$23BZD, Double \$33BZD,

Triple \$48BZD

Get off bus at Catholic Church on

Main & Church Streets, walk down

hill 75 yards to Guesthouse.





## Current Issues

# “The Maya Homeland Problem”

**By: Meb Cutlack**

NICH, the National Institute of Culture and History has, from almost nowhere, rekindled the thorny debate on the issue of a homeland for the Maya. The real point is of course that all indigenous people everywhere deserve a deal that gives them, at very least, a fair share of the land and prosperity of their country of origin - rather than the deal they have. Which, in Belize's case, amounts to almost total exclusion from both the land and the wealth of Belize.

The Maya of Toledo, the Maya from the North and from the West are historically slotted into rural poverty. They have been denied anything but a token representation in the political, economic and social life and fabric of the nation as a whole. We can look at this situation and decry it. We can weep crocodile tears and lament the role of

history in placing the Maya so low on the scale of a share in, and rewards from, the nation's wealth.

The time for useless rhetoric is however over. We have to do something about this situation immediately! Our need for action is made the more urgent by the fact that on an almost daily basis more and more Mayan traditional lands are being sucked up by property speculators - encouraged and in consort with government officials and ministers.

And, more and more of the lands of Belize as a whole are being detached from the people of Belize by greedy politicians thinking only of lining their own pockets.

There is only one way to stop what is happening and that is not so much as to hand huge land tracts

to the Mayan people, or to any other group, but to take all land distribution away from the Government and hand it to regional committees composed, certainly in Toledo's case, of a majority of Toledo Mayans.

The real truth is that all Belizeans, whether Mayan or Garifuna or Creole deserve the right to land. Where there is a majority of any such group (in any district) it should be natural that they have a fair say in how the land in that district is distributed. No group and no individual in Belize should be excluded from the right to own land. And, that includes not just rural Belizeans but all our town and city dwellers too.

A writer to a Belize online list serv wrote this week: "The (ILO) convention which was passed in 1989 seeks to right the injustices imposed on indigenous and tribal peoples by asserting their human dignity, rights to land, rights to employment, vocational training local government and other issues.

For Belize this theoretically means an increased inclusion of the Maya and Garifuna peoples who are deemed as indigenous."

And he adds: "The Maya and Garifuna people need to talk to the American Indians to gain some insight into what works and what does not work. Inclusion is a better avenue than isolation."

Quite rightly, the PM. Said Musa, has said that he will never preside over 'the balkanization of Belize' and, without care, that is exactly what could happen -especially if greed and emotion rather than common sense were to dictate land distribution in Belize.

Belize is the homeland of all Belizeans. It is time it was taken back from the present rapacious set of exploiters who masquerade as legitimate government in Belize.

# “Ills of Urbanization”

➡ (Continued From Page 8)

The young wife waits in vain for him to come home. There are no lights, or even a road behind Town where they built their shack, and she is worried and afraid.

By the afternoon of the next day, she learns that her husband has been arrested, and taking her three children, goes to see him. But the police tell her she has missed the visiting hours and must come back the next day at the appointed time. She returned home alone, hungry and afraid.

Meanwhile the word has gone out. A young, angry gang banger hears that she is at home alone with only three young children and she is pretty. He gets drunk, and late at night breaks in her flimsy door and beats and rapes her. Some neighbors hear screaming and the children crying but none dare go out into the dark night to investigate...

If you think this story is far fetched, you had better think again. It only means you have a secure roof over your head and know how to live in town. You weren't brought up in a rural village in the forgotten district, and forced to move to town. You don't know what it really means to be a defenseless woman with young hungry children, alone and frightened, with no family or friends, no education and a husband who has gone missing.

Or maybe you were born in town and are struggling to get by and have lost your jobs to villagers who have moved to town because they could not

make a good living in the village. If you have been there, you do know and have empathy, sympathy and you will help those who are trying to

prevent this kind of urbanization by supporting the Toledo People's Eco Park.

## Boat for SALE for US \$10,000

- 21' open fisherman
- double hull
- flooring recently refurbished
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- 14 rod holders
- 6 holders for trolling
- dependable 200hp Yamaha with 120 hours
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- new bottom paint/anti-fouling paint
- 60 gallon tank
- new seat belts
- she flies - no brakes available.

**Contact owner:  
tel. 225-3520**





Your weekly

HOROSCOPE

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

You have your own family to consider as well. Go after your professional goals. You can make money through your own creative efforts. Your temper could be short if someone criticizes your efforts. You can make major decisions regarding your professional direction. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

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

You have a real need to be vocal. Try not to use emotional blackmail; it will only make matters worse. You probably aren't getting straight answers to your questions. Problems with fire, gas, or oil may cause disruptions and annoyances. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

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

You may have the opportunity to get involved in some interesting conversations. Try to address the real issues in order to turn things around. You will have to be careful not to let others find out about your intentions. There could be opposition or temper tantrums on the home front. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

**CANCER** (June 22-July 22)

Stress may cause minor health ailments. Do things that involve children. You may be emotionally unstable if you let someone you care about get away with verbal abuse. You may need to make a choice. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

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

Your mate, however, may not be too pleased with you. Get down to busi-

ness. You've been in a rut and you need to do something that will help you break the pattern you've fallen into. Don't overextend yourself in the process. You need to take a good look at all sides of an issue before making a decision. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

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

Take a short business trip if possible. Property purchases should be on your mind. Romantic opportunities will be plentiful if you go out with friends. Moves or the possibility of having someone different living with you may be difficult at first. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

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

Control those desires to cast your fate to the wind. Secret affairs may be tempting. Upgrading at this point is not a bad plan. Losses are likely if you have left your financial affairs in other people's hands. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

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

You must make sure that all your personal documents are in order. You have the ability to motivate others. Look into joining groups that can give you hands-on advice about business. You'll look guilty if you don't lay your cards on the table. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

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

Travel could bring you the adventure and excitement you require. You will be emotional about your personal life. You are best to tuck your money away where no one will be able to touch it, including yourself. Family outings or a

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een

Page



Q: What are four hundred rabbits hopping backwards?

A: A receding hare line .

Q: What did the rabbit say to the carrot?

A: It's been nice gnawing you.

Q: The more he takes away the bigger it becomes. What is it?

A: A rabbit hole.

Q: How is a rabbit like a Q-tip?

A: They both have cotton tails.

Q: What is the difference between a crazy rabbit and a counterfeit cent?

A: One is a mad bunny and the other is bad money.

Q: What would you call a rabbit who is mad at the sun?

A: A hot cross bunny.

Q: What would you get if you crossed a rabbit with a bumblebee?

A: A honey bunny.

Q: How is a rabbit like a cornstalk?

A: They both have big ears.

Q: Why is a leaky faucet like a cowardly bunny?

A: Because it runs.

Q: Why is a rabbit like a cent?

A: Because it has a head on one end and a tail on the other.

quiet stroll through the park will lead to stimulating conversation and a closer bond. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

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

Opportunities for financial gains through investments and games of chance are likely. You have more energy than the rest of the people you live with anyway. A change in position could be better than you thought. Catch up on overdue phone calls and correspondence. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

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

You will be able to work in fine detail and present the best possible proposal.

Relatives will not agree with the way you are dealing with your personal problems. You're best not to get involved in joint financial ventures. Complete those hobbies you started a long time ago. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

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

Take care of any medical problems if they've been troubling you. You can work in conjunction with those in the know in order to get to the bottom of any pending issue. You're best to channel your energy into work. Your emotional state could leave you vulnerable and confused. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



THE

hunt

FOR

GOOD FOOD

with Anthony Hunt

BESSY'S FAST FOOD

Lord's Bank Road, Ladyville

In the mood for Panades on a Friday evening during this Lenten season? Do you live in Ladyville too? If you answer yes to both, then Bessy's is the place for you. Her petite panades are excellent in both their beans and fish incarnations, while her gachos stir up memories of the 10 am "rush fi Dario's" food stand during my school days at SJC. Located in the metropolis of Lord's Bank, Bessy's serves them all up hot and fresh. It is not often that you seen a roadside food shop that is spotless inside, but this in one. This gives us confidence the food is made with care and an attention to hygiene. And the pepper sauce, well ... what is a panades without onion "fi di tap", and the two attendants (who knows which one is Bessy) will certainly give you ample. So, before you commit a sin and eat chicken on a Friday this lent, give Bessy's a try. As the photo suggests, I did just that!

OPEN DAILY  
Prices : Panades 3 for \$1



## TOPICAL TIDBITS

### Los Ricos asked to help Los Pobres



From Inside Costa Rica—Costa Rican president Oscar Arias Sánchez, during a cabinet session held in Paraíso de Cartago, urged Costa Ricans with financial resources to help poor families, as the government cannot give them all they need, Costa Rica being a poor country.

The Arias cabinet held their session in the Salón Picacho in celebration of the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the moving of the Ujarrás to the Llanos de Santa Lucía, today known as Paraíso.

“We have to be better, more human, we can be more charitable, united, generous with those who have less, help out more the needy, because the State cannot give them all,” said Arias.

### Drug Kingpin's associates in Belize?



TAMPA, Fla. AP.— The U.S. Treasury Department announced Wednesday it is freezing the assets of dozens of businesses and individuals believed to be associated with a Colombian drug

kingpin wanted on federal cocaine trafficking charges.

The agency said the 45 companies and 64 people added to a federal drug trafficking list were part of Fabio Enrique Ochoa Vasco's “extensive criminal and financial network.” Ochoa and 12 others were indicted by a Tampa grand jury in 2004 on federal charges they conspired to bring more than five tons of cocaine into the United States. Only two of the 13 men have been arrested. Authorities are offering a \$5 million reward for Ochoa's arrest.

The designation of Ochoa, key financial managers and the companies as drug traffickers allows authorities to freeze all their U.S.-controlled assets. It also prohibits Americans from doing business with them. The agency said Ochoa's financial network has roots in Colombia, **Belize**, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Panama and Mexico.

### Guatemalan drug Traffickers sent north



(Reuters) - For the first time in 15 years, Guatemala sent accused drug smugglers to face trafficking charges in the United States on Tuesday, winning Washington's praise for stepping up a war against organized crime.

Suspected heroin smugglers Javier Reyes and Alberto Ramírez, who were arrested in 2005 by Guatemalan authorities and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, will face trial in New York, the U.S. Embassy in Guatemala said in a statement. It was the first time since 1992 that Guatemala, a major transit point for U.S.-bound South American cocaine and heroin, has sent criminal suspects to face specific drug-trafficking charges in the United States, the embassy said.

Officials said the pair formed part of an international ring that smuggled heroin hidden in cars from Colombia

through Guatemala and onto the United States. Dubbed “Operation Jump Start,” the 2005 sweep led to over 100 arrests, the confiscation of over 100 kilograms (220 pounds) of heroin and cocaine and more than \$1 million in cash.

### Guns for computers



MEXICO CITY (Reuters) - Police who have raided vice-ridden Mexico City neighbourhoods in a push against drug violence hope to take guns off the streets by offering to swap them for computers and video-game consoles.

Launching the program on Tuesday in the notorious inner-city barrio of Tepito, which police stormed last month, city police chief Joel Ortega said anyone who turns in a high-caliber weapon like a machine gun will get a computer.

Owners can swap smaller guns for cash or Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox video-game consoles under the plan.

### Guatemalan Interior Minister resigns



Associated Press: Guatemala's interior minister Carlos Vielman resigned on Monday in the wake of a scandal over police investigators' alleged involvement in the grisly murder of three Salvadoran politicians last month, while President Oscar Berger rejected a Congressional declaration expressing a lack of confidence in Carlos Vielman.

The charred bodies of three Salvadoran members of The Central American Parliament, which is based in Guatemala, were found along a rural road on Feb. 19. Autopsies determined that two were burned alive, while the third legislator and their driver died before their bodies were set on fire. Officials have identified seven Guatemalan police officials as suspects, including four who were arrested but later killed in prison under circumstances that remain murky. Another officer is in custody, and two remain at large. Vielman, who initially presented his resignation days after the police officers' involvement was uncovered, said he was quitting because opposition party lawmakers in the Congress “used public security in a political fashion and not in an institutional way.”

## Visit The Belize Zoo

## The Best Little Zoo In The World



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# Buying Belize Real Estate

## – Twin Cayes and caveat emptor

Owning your own Caye would be great, but be careful what you buy, it might sink into the mud!

On a recent trip to Belize, I happened to glance in the window of a real estate agency near the swing bridge in Belize City. Posted there was an offer for parcel J68, “2.01 acres situated on the south-western portion of Twin Caye, Stann Creek”.

The announcement went on to say: “The land has been partially filled, good fishing, near the reef, ready to build on. US\$150,000.” It did seem high to me, but then I have since found out that US\$75K per acre is about the going price for a good Caye. Pretty clearly not a market for Belizeans. Still...

Because I had been working on mangroves on this little island for a couple years, I stopped into the office to learn more. Basically, I learned the 2 acres was mostly cleared bush, and filled with sand. I know the spot. There has been no development, I was told, possibly a few palms planted, but it could probably be used to grow limes. It is owned by some people in Dangriga. Now, I had just returned from Twin Cayes where the equinox with the full moon had resulted in really high spring tides, and this “parcel” was completely under water, so I asked about flooding.

What I learned was that the tides here are only about 9 inches so there should be no problem. I asked about building and he said typically, you drill hydraulically down to the coral which should be no more than about 4 to 5 feet, then you want to build up to get away from the insects. I asked about water and he said that typically you could drill a shallow well (a few feet) and get brackish water for most uses, but that otherwise you would collect water from the roof in a cistern. It does indeed rain a lot there.

But there has been an extraordinary amount of research done on this island. Type “Twin Cayes” into any search engine and see what you find. It is not underlain by coral. It is peat... the partially decomposed remains of thousands of years of mangrove roots. It is peat down about 40 feet. There is no fresh or even brackish water anywhere. And if you cut down the mangroves, as this parcel has had done, then the peat begins to decompose without renewal. It sinks. It is also anaerobic, so it stinks.

So if you want real estate in Belize, or if you want your own tropical island, look carefully before you buy. You could be waste deep in the big

muddy before the ink dries on the sale.

### Belize For Sale

*The Belize Guardian*  
[www.guardian.bz/foresale.html](http://www.guardian.bz/foresale.html)

Belizeans have been bombarded with instance after instance of PUP corruption and greed over the last 8 years. Still, many Belizeans truly believe that we have only touched the proverbial “tip of the iceberg” where PUP corruption and greed are concerned. Many believe that rampant corruption exists in the Ministry of Natural Resources, particularly where public lands being converted to private hands are concerned, but that information has not been forthcoming.

Sometimes, one has to look outside the box to gain a glimpse of the type of corruption that exists within the Ministry with respect to public lands. All Belizeans are aware that endless PUP cronies and operatives have been accumulating vast tracts of prime public lands, mostly for speculative purposes or for accessing financing for which they have no collateral (Arnaldo Peña has seemingly perfected the latter).

On the matter of speculation, there is currently a foreign company called Vladi Private Islands Limited ([www.vladi-private-islands.de](http://www.vladi-private-islands.de)) that is advertising 8 different island/caye properties for sale, with advertised prices ranging from US\$695,000 to US\$9.0 million. Except for one “Montego Caye”, which “is situated in the Caribbean and belongs to Belize”, all are reported as being privately owned. Prices range from US\$53,462 per acre to US\$430,000 per acre.

Most recently, The Guardian received official information that the

Government was in the process of selling some (275 + 240 =) 515 acres of “land” on North Drowned Caye to Michael Feinstein and Stake Bank Enterprises for BZ\$52.00 per acre.

With administrative fees and other Government fees, the 275 acre parcel was calculated at a final price of BZ\$18,768.75, or BZ\$68.25 per acre. In the February 26, 2006 issue of The Guardian, it was reported (Servulo Baeza wheeling and dealing) that Minister Servulo Baeza had transferred some 29.97 acres of prime land on Hen and Chickens Caye to Dion Zabaneh (of the missing BTL BZ\$6.0 million fame) for the price of BZ\$7,792.20, or BZ\$260.00 per acre.

The prices offered to Feinstein and Zabaneh pale in comparison to the prices being asked for by the “owners” of the islands advertised by Vladi and shows just how much temptation there is for corruption where such lands are concerned. Although North Drowned Caye is mostly under water, it can be seen how one can spend a little money (by comparison) to convert this caye into an extremely valuable property for speculation.

Even if the North Drowned Caye is not intended for speculation and is instead intended for development in relation to cruise tourism, one can see how the effects of such development could cause Ara Macao to be a practical “saint” by comparison. And given the prices being asked for properties such as Montego Caye, it would appear that this caye would only be attractive for commercial development, bringing its own mountain of environmental concerns.

Interestingly, the Chief Executive

Officer in the Ministry of Natural Resources, Ismael Fabro, is not aware that there is any caye that “belongs to Belize” that is up for sale. The Ministry is also unaware of any development plans for North Drowned Caye, as is the Ministry of Fisheries.

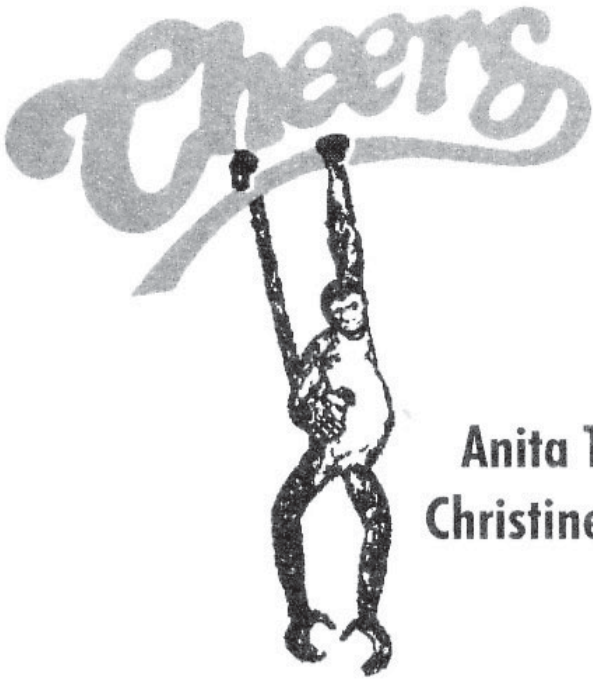
So, it appears that there are endless concerns where the management of public properties is concerned. The Guardian has previously reported of land grabbing schemes involving Minister of State Rodwell Ferguson in Stann Creek West, and the type of speculation the Vladi cases expose hints to the type of temptation our elected officials have to face. We all know this current band of PUP pirates cannot resist such temptation.

But what is also very hypocritical about this PUP Government is that it took back caye properties sold to former UDP standard bearer Tony Leslie, which he had bought for BZ\$2,000.00 per acre. Musa said this was a corrupt deal, and further said caye properties should fetch at least BZ\$10,000.00 per acre. While one may not totally disagree with Musa for taking back the property from Leslie, one has to wonder what Musa would now have to say about Hen and Chickens Caye and North Drowned Caye. Are these just cases of business as usual for PUP cronies under a PUP Government?

*Ed Note: The above reports were posted by mr Cheyenne Morrison on the private islands Blog*

*Private Islands For Sale, Island Resorts & Exotic Islands World-Wide*

<http://private-islands.blogspot.com/2006/07/belize-islands-market.html>



## With a Tropical Twist

**Anita Tupper**  
**Christine Tupper**

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# Challenges of the News business



**By: Trevor Vernon**

Granted, we don't do hard news. We don't go chasing Police Press Office for crime reports. You can get that elsewhere in Belize and at various websites. But even so, in this business the challenges abound, every single day. So I thought I'd share a bit as we cross over into our second trimester.

Mostly its about having loyal readership, solid distribution channels, committed stakeholders, ad revenues, impeccable sources and a great product. We experience challenges with distribution, sources, and ads, but let me tell you first about what we have no trouble with, then get into the difficult issues.

Our readership is already fiercely loyal to the product. They call, or write us often, not just columns and letters to the editor either. Sometimes just to share ideas and suggestions. Its great, and we love it. It keeps us going on difficult days and adds to our satisfaction on easy days.

The Independent is the rebel paper and goes where few dare to tread. We don't apologize for that. We don't need to curry favour with the political directorate for our supper. Thanks be to God. And we are not easily intimidated, although on occasion they try. We have absolutely no fear to call a spade a spade and our readership appreciates this.

Our stakeholders are multitalented individuals who understand the ruggedness of the business. Cumulatively they bring over 90 years of experience in the business, from a number of continents. We are truly blessed to have assembled such a great team here at the INdependent Reformer Weekly.

Many of our contributors have seemingly come out of thin air, as if by magic. Only a few were known to us before we got started. Others just send us articles, photographs, even cartoons by mail or email, or in person. They are typed, handwritten (which makes the editor crazy since we have no typist) or in jpg files. With return addresses, emails and cell numbers or unmarked manila envelopes. It is as if all these people were just waiting for the proper vehicle to drive up and open the door to their

**The Independent is a rebel paper and goes where few dare to tread. We don't apologize for that.**

thoughts.

We must thank them all for their faith in us. More so their unshakable faith in Belize, despite the rough ride it's given almost all of us. These people renew our hope in this country and our countrymen and women.

Most interestingly, and quite accidentally, we have noticed times when several of our writers are all on the same page. Not literally, but thematically. It's interesting and no doubt you have noticed it too. Somehow, someway, people appear to be sharing similar thoughts at similar times. Talk about synergy!

Finally, also in the positive column is what we believe to be a good product that will continue to evolve. This evolution is from constant feedback of the readership, (both domestic & international), the committed staff, and some educational institutions we liaise with.

Now in the not-so-positive column, everyone seems to be obsessed with our meager ad revenues because they can count our ads and figure we are not getting enough. True. Visible ad revenue can and must be tremendously improved. We have the entire status quo political system off kilter with our radical rebel approach and together they control every single aspect of economic life in Belize. They wish we'd go away

so they lean on every business they can to refrain from patronizing us with ads. Perfectly understandable and fully anticipated. So yes, they are successful so far, but we have backup plans, so not to worry.

In wishing we'd fold, the bipartisan political system is also trying to tamper with our distribution system. We had to cut several distributors in Caye Caulker because they are openly handing over the papers to PUP operatives for destruction by bonfire. Crude. In the old

capital, the attacks are more subtle, slicker, smoother with intimidation. In the city, people just "get sick" and you never see them again and not only do they not pay you for amounts owed, their "replacement" refuses to sell your product.

Some stores have declined to stock our paper. One major supermarket told my wife point blank the very first week, "Sorry, no space on the counter." They have since told readers who enquired after the Independent that we dropped it but never came back. Absolutely not true and please challenge the lie if they continue to repeat it.

But these cases are the exception rather than the rule and we MUST thank our loyal distributors whether in larger establishments, mom and pops—both over and under the counter—and several men and women who can only be described as "All Star" street sellers. To these people who clearly care more about the weekly customers than would be mind controllers, we say thank you. And we hope you will say it too, when they hand over your hot-off-the-National-Printers-press copy next week. Minus any burn or singe marks around the edges.

You have a constitutional right to read whatever you want to read. Remember

that if anyone tries to intimidate you or keep reading material from you. Remember it when you go to the polls too. For if they are hiding opinion pieces in a newspaper from your eyes, what else are they hiding?

Now as far as sources, readers freely share information with us as do the NGO's and most corporations and we are grateful. But when it comes to government releases, we appear to be blocked out from their supposedly open media policy. Hence we get no releases from government or quasi government bodies. None. Forget the ads for job vacancies with the various ministries and items such as election results or stats from Central Bank which are supposed to, by law, be published with all registered newspapers. Our letter from the Solicitor General gave us permission to run a newspaper in November, 2006. Maybe we should publish a copy here.

Another thing about sources: we've asked for informal interviews (pre-printed questions) from the Leader of the Opposition and other mass party/political establishment figures and they've simply refused to respond. Instead, they take our questions (mainly about appointments to various advisory committees) and incorporate them a couple days later into their addresses at the National Assembly in the form of new grandiose promises. Empty promises we believe... that they have no intention of fulfilling.

We here at the Independent do intend to fulfill our promises to you the reader. And you in turn are doing a fantastic job of finding each issue each week and sharing it with your friends and family. Thanks to all those in Chicago and other US cities who download it and print it off to circulate.

They can burn the hardcopies on the ground in Belize, but not the ones floating in cyberspace...run, fellas, run; but you are right, you know, in the end, the truth will set us free. Whether you want Belizeans to read it or not.

## FACTS OR TRUTH?

☛ (Continued From Page 4)  
overpriced phone bills, converting the revenues (supposedly belonging to charities according to newspaper quotes—laugh!) then changing them on the illegal parallel market and smuggling them to Panamanian shell company shelf accounts for influence there. No prosecutions obviously, as the WOLF is guarding the hen house.

CAL's exposure is obviously breaking the money trail. What the media will have to tell us next week is suspenseful and fine entertainment, as we wait the develop-

ments in this local Novela. I wouldn't be surprised to learn that the big man now owns a shell bank in Panama. It seems the obvious next step in this novella.

Who will lay claim to the estates of M and F, G and A when they die? Will this novella get that far and we have a furor like the Anna Nicole (\$500 million inheritance tv thingy?) Who will have the knowledge of secret accounts and authority to get the money among the many descendants?

How do you money launder over a hundred million dollars US of Belize GUAR-

ANTEED foreign exchange? As the participants learn, so do we, thanks to the investigative reporters of our newspaper media.

The thing I can't understand, is why these criminals do it? They are all old guys now and probably can't even get it up without VIAGRA? Sex is supposed to be the subconscious driving force of males trying to get rich. But if you don't get rich until late in life, it sort of loses it's purpose I would think? I don't see any of them enjoying things, like parasailing, or yacht racing, or

something like that, while they are healthy enough to do it. Must be something in the genes inherited personality characteristics.

Some people just steal and do scams because they enjoy the game. They don't need the money; it is just the numbers represent a score card. Still, our newspapers are fine entertainment as they hint and reveal with ironic articles at the maneuverings at the highest political levels of characters following thousands of years of historical plot lines of similar human criminality and foibles.



# TOO WILD FOR WORDS!

## Fresh catch Tilapia Farm: heroes for our Jabiru storks!!

While some development projects conveniently turn their heads to the impact they may be having upon the environment, FreshCatch, Belize has proven to be a "Wings Up" exception!

Situated off the coastal road, this massive tilapia farm produces high quality fish for both the local and foreign markets. Their ponds have also seen an increase of Jabiru storks in the area.

Field research, conducted by Omar Figueroa, has shown that less than 200 Jabiru storks remain in Belize. This is yet another reminder that our Belizean wildlife, so rare and special, requires our concern, care, and protection to see it thrives into the future.

Hungry Jabiru storks, and in some cases, needing extra food to care for young during the breeding sea-



*A national symbol, the well-being of the jabiru stork is also indicative of the nation's well-being.*

son, have given a huge "wings up" to FreshCatch.

The Jabiru, at times numbering 25 or more birds, visit the tilapia farm and readily sample the fish. Mr. Joe Mena and his son, Emil, have chosen to work in concert with The Belize Zoo and Birds Without Borders, to see that the Jabiru remain safe and sound. This kind approach is not only good for our scant Jabiru stork population, it is great for the nation of Belize.

The Jabiru stork is a charismatic part of our country's natural heritage. Thanks to the Menas, and their principled stand aimed at protecting, rather than persecuting these birds, the chances of seeing this superb species live on in Belize, look very, very good!

"Wings Up" to Fresh Catch, Belize!!!

# Politician attacks Journalist

## UDP Standard Bearer for Orange Walk Central charged

*The following account was sent to Independent Weekly by Belizean journalist Jorge Aldana. He claims he was assaulted by an aspiring candidate for Area Representative during Village Council Elections in Trial Farm.*

"I was doing my weekend coverage of Village Council elections in every village in the Corozal and Orange Walk District. When I made a stop at Trial Farm Village after 12 the afternoon, I did the normal procedure, tried to get figures from the returning officer. When I was coming out, my News Director, who was at Trial Farm decided to give me instructions.

"At that time I stood to listen while the UDP supporters started to insult me with rude comments. I ignored the comments. I believe that because I work at the *Centaur* and host a morning show on *Fiesta*, both owned by Johnny Briceno, the people targeted me. Anyway, when the leader of the UDP, Dean Barrow arrived at the site, I told my cameraman to focus the camera on him. He arrived with Gaspar Vega; moments later joined by Rosendo Urbina Sr.

After Barrow passed by us, with his two other UDP partners, a UDP supporter, the assistant administrator and driver of O.W. Mayor, said to me "Say something now; say it. Since yu has lot



*O. Walk Central Standard bearer Rosendo Urbina, the man accused of losing his cool.*

to say on the Mawning Show, say it."

At that point, Urbina started to point towards me and proceeded to where I was standing. He went up to me and slapped me on the left side of my face. Immediately a swarm of UDP supporters and PUP supporters clashed. About 30 seconds after, Vega left Barrow and walked to where I was, about 20 to 30 feet away, came up to me and attempted to do same, but at that time I was prepared for him. He told me "I am a dead man walking." That caused a larger confrontation which was broken by the police.

We were removed from the site, where I was escorted moments later by a large multitude of PUP supporters into my vehicle along with my cameraman. I decided to take the matter to the police so that justice is done."

For his part Rosendo Urbina told LOVE FM's Manuela Ayuso he never hit Aldana, that instead he was attempting to shake his hand.

Rosendo Urbina: U-D-P Standard Bearer "Somebody pointed to me and said "see Jorge Aldana right there" I did not know the guy I just hear him over the radio, I don't know him per-

sonally. So I went to him and they pointed the camera at me and I told the camera to move, I lift up my hands to tell the camera to move because i know they were taping me. I went to him, I wanted to shake his hands but he did not want to so I told him "tell me weh yuh have fu tell me" and a do mi hand like that because ah mi deh shake ih hand right. Ah put mi hand beside him and when I saw some people were struggling began to push and they thought that I was going to assault him. And so I drew back and when I drew back I told him "well listen yuh done geh red, suppose ah mi touch yuh how yuh mi whan get, ah neva even touch yuh an yuh done get red?" "like that" them ah turn to Nrei and ah tell ah "yuh done get red too" and then afta that I pick up myself and I gawn and that was it. And as far as I know that's what happened nothing more, all right. This morning \police come to my warehouse and they said report to the Police station and I came and they charged me with Common Assault and they said tomorrow we will have to come to Court, that's about it."

From [www.lovefm.com](http://www.lovefm.com) March 27, 2007



# Give land use issues back to the Belizean people

By: Nadja Chamberlain

After questioning many knowledgeable people throughout Belize regarding the present problems in environmental policy, planning, and management, the following issues were consistently brought up. These issues should be a part of the environmental platform of every entity – party or individual — running for office:

- \* Public input regarding environmental matters must be encouraged. The people of Belize must become advocates for environmental issues and become a part of the decision making process.
- \* Public access to ALL meetings re-

garding environmental matters should be granted. Government in the Sunshine laws, similar to those in other parts of the world should be instated, for example: <http://myfloridalegal.com/sun.nsf/manual>

- \* Ministerial Discretion should not be allowed in environmental matters. Any issues regarding the land and land use should be resolved by public forum and with full representation by the citizens.
- \* De-designation of any part of, or all of, any park or protected natural area should not occur without the vote of the citizenry.
- \* Citizen participation in the development review process in Belize is in-

adequate. Citizen participation in the process should be early in the process. A review board of private citizens with knowledge of environmental review issues should make the decision whether a project is in the public interest – not government officials or employees. ALL NEAC meetings should be open to the public. No voting on projects should be behind closed doors, nor should there be any private discussions between committee members regarding a project outside of an open forum. At present, many members of NEAC are government employees and as such are subject to duress. There are sufficient numbers of private citizens with knowledge of environmental assessment issues to serve as board members; private citizens could make decisions based on facts rather than pressure. The function of government employees should be to provide information to the board, not to make the decisions.

\* Knowledgeable citizens’ committees

in open meetings should make the decisions on all land use planning and management issues, whether local, regional, or national.

\* Any proposed purchase of government land by public office holders, their representatives or families, should be advertised well in advance of the actual finalization of the purchase. Approval or denial of a proposed purchase should be made by an elected environmental planning board.

\* All sales or purchases of government land over a certain number of acres should be advertised in advance and members of a district land management or environmental planning board should evaluate the proposal.

Belize has many, many brilliant and caring citizens with specialized knowledge that could step in and volunteer to be a part of this process — whether it be on a local, regional, or national level. Please begin thinking how YOU could help and give us some input.

## In Quest for Good Governance Cayo students & SPEAR organize Yaad Talk

A service learning group from Galen University in Cayo has partnered with the Society for the Promotion of Education, Advocacy, and Research (SPEAR) and invites the public to join them in an open forum discussing the issues that affect every Belizean. Hode’s Place in San Ignacio will be the epicenter for new ideas on Belize’s promising future from 5:30 to 8:30 on Thursday April 12.

In this expansion, students in a service learning project class - Kyle Lovell, Emily May, Kali Brant, and Laura Magnuson, are eager to embark on this task. They will be distributing pamphlets to inform citizens about SPEAR and organizing a venue for open discussion of relevant issues. Let your voice be heard! In gathering together, the people of the Cayo district can organize as a community and together push for the true needs of the country in the upcoming election. In this crucial time, they look forward to your support and the vast opportunities that await Belize.

As a non-governmental, non-partisan, civil-service group, SPEAR has

been a part of Belize since 1969. Based out of Belize City, SPEAR has been embarking on the quest for good governance with an emphasis on transparency, accountability, and people’s participation. Through various campaigns and activities, SPEAR has been effective in the past yet desires to grow as an organization that can work for the people of Belize to ensure a positive outcome in the upcoming 2008 election. Their mission is clear and imperative: to continue the struggle for justice, democracy and sustainable development.

Belize needs the participation of its citizens and SPEAR encourages you to join them in this mission. An organization fighting for the best interests of the people cannot possibly thrive without the support of its citizens. Otherwise, their best interests cannot be achieved. This is why SPEAR has made it a priority to expand membership and involvement.

Free food at the SPEAR yaad talk will encourage a change in the government.

## Social Page



Zee Edgell autographs copies of her new book “Time and the River”.

Belize’s most beloved author and the woman who has inspired at least two generations of Belizean writers, has done it again. Zee Edgell’s fourth novel was launched March 28th at the Bliss Institute. “Time and the River” is historical fiction set in 1798 and delves into the complex relationships

between masters, slaves and freemen and women. The book is published by Heineman and has been eagerly awaited by her fans, students and educators. Among those attending the launch were Belizean writers, poets and playwrights such as Carol Fonseca, (pictured above).

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 K Call 600-1627 for details
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# PUP loses Ladyville

➡ (Continued From Page 1)

showing for the Opposition, appearances were made by numerous ranking personalities, including their Party Leader himself. Others included: house of representatives opposition members, UDP standard bearers, UDP City Counsellors, UDP Execu-



UDP supporter Wilmott Simmons encourages residents to vote for a better way.

tive, and their supporters. Impressive. Never before in the history of Ladyville has an election at the Village Council level attracted so much national attention and voter turnout. Never before. For some reason the R-Z line was full all day and when this writer went to vote the waiting time was 32 minutes. At the close of the polls at 5:00 PM there were well over a hundred and twenty people in line.



Independent supporter Tim Thompson compares notes with PUP Minister Jose Coye.

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