

The Independent

Reform for the People

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Selling out: how much is your vote worth?

A blue note? A plate of dinner and a ride to the polls? Have you ever been offered, or accepted money or favors for your support on election day? If so, you are not alone. But what's really in it for you? What does it really cost you, and your country?

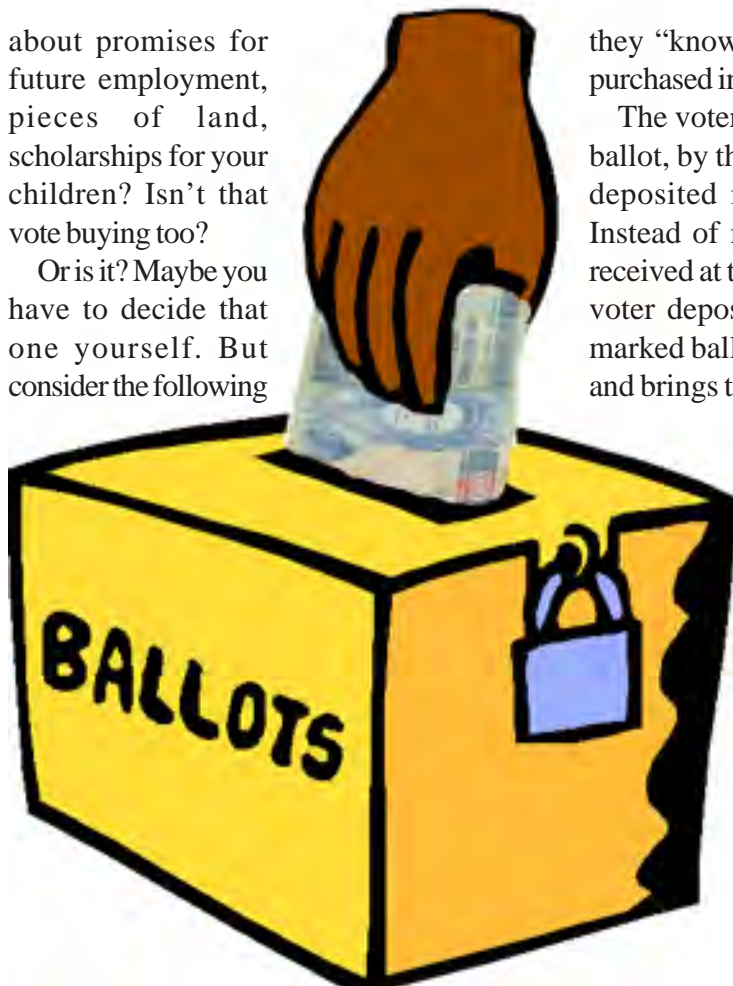
The buying and selling of votes, together with the importation of foreigners to vote in national elections is a familiar component of the election campaign in Belize. It is so blatant, so obvious in so many instances the Political Reform Commission addressed the problem. In their report the commissioners noted, **"It is a well – known fact that the practice, while illegal is rampant"**.

That was in 2000. Has anything changed since then, or will Belize's next election be for sale too? Will your vote go on the auction block, given to the highest bidder?

Neva! You say, you would never sell your vote. Not for cash maybe, but what

about promises for future employment, pieces of land, scholarships for your children? Isn't that vote buying too?

Or is it? Maybe you have to decide that one yourself. But consider the following



they "know" how votes were purchased in past elections:


The voter is given a marked ballot, by the vote buyer, to be deposited in the ballot box. Instead of marking the ballot received at the polling place the voter deposits the previously marked ballot in the ballot box and brings the unmarked ballot

to the buyer. The unmarked ballot is then exchanged for the money which he or she was to be paid for his or her vote.

It is entirely possible that such a system allowed certain candidates to win elections that they may have

otherwise lost. That people who now sit in Cabinet, hold office as Area Representatives, would not be where they are right now if the people who voted for them had not accepted money. Had not allowed themselves to be paid off, had not sold their franchise for practically nothing.

And it costs those politicians practically nothing in the wider scheme of things. After the last national election the buzz in one villages was that there had been more than \$100,000 in checks cashed immediately before the voting, to obtain cash to buy votes. That's about the same amount in salary some top government appointees get in a year. Or some government drivers get in perks and allowances. And where did that money come from? Some wealthy campaign financier? Or the taxes collected in that same village?

Let's not mince words here. The voter that sells his or her vote makes a (Please Turn To Page 3) 

Money Laundering in Belize?

By Justin Other Gingo, Esq.

This article contains no accusations. I will simply describe money laundering as it exists world-wide, and then perhaps suggest some places where you might find it yourself in Belize. My primary source is Jeffery Robinson's book, *The Laundrymen*, (Simon & Schuster, 1994) which does not mention Belize at all. However, as you read the book, if you are a Belizean or "an old Belize hand" as I am, you will notice many places where laundering may be going on.

Money Laundering Basics

What is Money Laundering? Quite simply, it is the handling of money which was collected illegally. Most often, that money is drug money, but it may also be money collected from the sale of pornography, illegal contracts, from human trafficking or political corruption.

Ever since Al Capone was sent off to prison for income tax evasion, potentially dirty money has been under close scrutiny. If you try to deposit any large (\$10,000?) sum of money in a bank in Belize, they

will ask you where it came from. And decline to accept the deposit if they don't like your looks or the sound of your explanation! (That's why a Belizean bank wants so much information about you when you open a new account.)

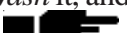
Profit. Consider how a normal business makes money. They buy or build a product which costs them \$100. If they sell it for \$200, that's "a hundred-percent markup." Such a profit is considered very good in normal (honest) business.

Drug Mark-ups. A South American manufacturer invests \$1000 in raw materials and produces a product which he sells to a North American wholesaler for \$10,000. A thousand-percent markup. He is very happy, but he now has a lot of dirty money he has to make legitimate.

The North American wholesaler takes the product and cuts it to one-fourth to one-eighth its original strength, and sells the new, greater amount for \$100,000. He is very happy, but now he has a lot of

money that (s)he will have to account for once it enters the formal economy.

What to do??? The drug manufacturer or dealer really doesn't want to be in the laundry business—he just wants to spend his profits without harassment from international law enforcement, which could include jail time. Because his profits are so extreme, he can normally sell his dirty money for a lot less than its face value in the US. For instance, he can sell a dollar for fifty cents—it only cost him 10 cents! So, he sells it to a laundryman, or perhaps goes to a laundromat and does it himself! In Belize, dirty money (in US dollars) is sold for a premium on the black market. Sweetness on top of sweetness. A Belize's finance ministry official called this the "parallel market" when reporters were probing a missing six million from a public company.

The Laundrymen. In Robinson's book, he relates hundreds of actual cases of money laundering throughout the world. The process is always pretty much the same. *Gather* the money, *Wash* it, and (Please Turn To Page 3) 

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Letter to the Editor

Just Change the names...

Dear Editor,

I refer to the article Vested Interests Control Honduras in the Jan 5 issue of the INdependent; in some ways, we could just change the names, and it would be descriptive of Belize, eh?

And, it is descriptive of the US as well. Again, just change the names....

This report is scandalous, of course, and I don't think we'd see a report of this detail in Belize, and certainly not in the US. The major corporations in the US have a death grip on the media, and they are engaged in massive propaganda operations to shift attention away from themselves and toward 'enemies' who cannot defend themselves (like the Muslims) or those who don't vote (like the illegal aliens).

In Belize, the UDP focuses on the poor — accusing the PUP of neglecting them, and not spending public monies properly. Meanwhile, the UDP neglects the critical issues of governance, transparency and accountability. And, we recollect that the corruption was just the same the last time the UDP was in power.

Have you ever watched one of those slight-of-hand magicians, pulling things out of your ear, or out of thin air? It's a lot like that — "watch this hand!" — while I pick your pocket with the other one.

Now, the internet gives us access to a lot of information, but at least half of it is disinformation. I like this report, because it names names - which as I said — probably won't happen in Belize. (Our "Rule of Law" makes it possible for someone with lots of money to sue you for Libel and tie you up in the courts for years. A definite flaw in the British libel laws, which seem to worry more about reputation than truth.)

But remember that, for example, half of the sites purporting to discuss the 9/11 issue are actually run indirectly by the US Government. So, you can probably believe about half of what you read on the internet!

As a Belize note: The report: Task Force on Services — Strategy for the Development of the Services Sector — 15 Oct 1999 is no longer on Belize government website. This report was produced by a blue ribbon panel commissioned by the Hon. Said Musa; its major conclusion was that the telecom monopoly was the largest single factor holding back growth in Belize. I believe that it was omitted from the new gov website because it's too embarrassing. The resale of BTL to "our British cousin" has ensured that a defacto monopoly of telecom services will continue to exist.

If you have not read this report, you can find it on the 'waybackmachine' at: http://web.archive.org/web/20000819025203/www.belize.gov.bz/library/task_force/welcome.shtml

It points out that (in 1999) 68% of Belize's GDP was accounted for by SERVICES, as compared to 15% for export products. This is because, in the Third Wave (<http://www.skypoint.com/members/mfinley/toffler.htm>) technology allows a third world country to LEAPFROG other countries who depend upon capital-intensive manufacturing & industry for their GDP.

Currently, I see some discussion of second wave technologies on the list servs. I want to caution you about this, because they are capital-intensive, and we invite outsiders (particularly those with narco-dollars) to take a big part in our economy when we look to this strategy for improving our GDP. Our strengths lie in our language proficiency and our geographic location,

and we need to exploit these.
Enuf for now.

Signed: Senior Rick

Suffering in the Land

Dear Editor,

I laughed so hard reading the article titled "Thirty Minute Country" in the latest edition of the Independent Weekly. While the author injected a lot of humor into the article, it is all so very true.

As a born and raised Belizean, it hurts me to say that I would not want to live there now. After about three days in Belize, I'm climbing the walls wanting to get the hell out. Call me traitor, call me chicken, but I just don't have the stomach for Belize anymore.

Every time I visit, the one song that keeps ringing in my ear is that old Jimmy Cliff song from the late 60's titled "Suffering In The Land". Do you know that this song was actually banned from playing on Radio Belize back in the late 60's? And it was not because of any vulgarity or anything like that. It was because of the words "the rich get richer and the poor get poorer". That's what I see every time I return to Belize.


I wish everyone a Happy and Healthy New Year.

Fortunately, money cannot purchase happiness nor good health and therefore, people can still be relatively happy living in Belize despite the oppressive conditions, much of which is brought on by the GOB.

Signed: Errol Sandiford

Mangrove Madness

Dear Editor,

Thank you Mr. Charles Heusner, Chairman of National Fishermen Producers Co-operative, for standing up for the mangrove! His small article came (Please Turn To Page 13) 

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Money Laundering in Belize?

➡ (Continued From Page 1)
Spin Dry it.

Gather it. In order to gather money, you have to have a place that's pretty public. They're all around us, so I will pick one. The one I'm picking may not actually be a laundryman on purpose, but he is functioning as one (perhaps unwittingly.) For example, consider a luxury car dealer in the USA. He accommodates people who have lots of cash. I talked to one of these guys once – a Ferrari dealer.

“Do they finance?” I asked.
“No, they usually take the cash out of their business. They're doctors and lawyers, you know.”

Wash it. Suppose I'm a drug dealer. I have \$1,000,000 of dirty money. I go into a Mercedes dealer (in the USA) and give him my card. It says “J. O. Gringo, Attorney-at-Law.” I tell him I want to buy a 2007, 300SEL and I want to pay cash.

He says “That car has a sticker price of \$120K, but for cash, I'll give it to you for a hundred grand!” He takes my

money, and I take the car.
Spin Dry. He takes my money to the bank to deposit.

“Where did you get it?”
“I sold a Mercedes 300 SEL, for cash!”
“Where did HE get the cash.”
“He's a lawyer.”
Story done.

Best ML Bets anywhere
Devices for money laundering worldwide:
Land Developments
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Cash Businesses
Private Banks
4. Special Attractions of Belize
Why do the laundry in Belize?
Land
Exports/Imports
Customs for sale
Tourist Traffic
Recent Twists
Developments in the past two or three years

The Conduit is gone
Cruise Ships
Lack of Evidence
It's all ‘secret deals’ so this is really just speculation
But... you can speculate too, huh?

Next issue, we'll talk about all the different ways the Laundrymen work.

About the Author:
Justin Other Gringo came to Belize in the 90's from the U.S and lived here for many years with a fictitious name. He has been involved in various local and international enterprises, and has learned a lot about “How Things Work in Belize.” He now lives in the U.S.

Selling out...

➡ (Continued From Page 1)
fool out of him or herself and will pay for the foolishness in the future, some way or another.

But it's about economics, not corruption you say. The voters are poor and the \$50.00 is a windfall they truly need... Okay, so let's look at the economics. Over the next 5 years that politician is in office, how many thousands, even millions of dollars does he or she get away with diverting from the needy people of Belize? A hell of a lot more than that \$50 or \$100 he/she paid on election day!

A voter should realize that anyone who offers to buy your vote is asking you to condone theft. To condone corruption, to condone the selling out of Belize. Anyone who has to buy your vote is already corrupt, already unfit to hold public office. He or she already di thief!

Perhaps more and more Belizeans are realizing this. Which may be why the practice of assisting illegal aliens and other non-qualified persons to vote in national elections has also become rampant.

In the last national election gill net fishermen from Guatemala came ashore at Monkey River to vote. When the citizens of Monkey River attempted to stop the Guatemalans from voting the police intervened. In fact, witnesses say the police escorted the Guatemalans to the polling booths!

Many Guatemalans came across the border into Belize to vote during the last national election. A sizeable number came from the city of Melchor, in Guatemala, most had been registered to vote. Eight of

them had the same registered address in Belize. That address was a vacant lot. These Guatemalans are rewarded for their votes. How many ministers have been elected to office with the assistance of Guatemalan votes? Guatemala, the same country that still has a border dispute with Belize is actually helping to determine who leads Belize! Think about that. Maybe that is precisely why the claim will never be resolved.

Neither major political party has made a move to correct the problem. Neither party appears to want to fulfill the mandate. Is it because UDP and PUP candidates believe they can out do the other in buying votes?

Buying votes is not only illegal it is un-democratic. It creates a situation where the candidates with the most money to buy votes can win. Vote buyers are violating the rights and opportunities of any third party candidates who seeks to be elected in a fair and honest election.

There are statutes that make it a crime to buy or attempt to buy votes. The Political Reform Commission has made it clear that the vote buying process is “illegal”. However, no one ever seems to be penalized for wrong doing.

If there is not already, there should also be a criminal statute that makes it a crime to aid or abet or attempt to aid or abet voting by a non qualified persons or the registration to vote of such non-qualified a persons. Those who
(Please Turn To Page 9) ➡

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Predictions for Belize in 2007

By: Karla Heusner Vernon

At the start of any new year, Belize's tarot card readers do a brisk business as people try to put the past behind them and catch a glimpse of their future. INdependent Weekly asked a completely unqualified source who "claims" to be psychic what the nation can look forward to in 2007. This is what she had to say--

A word of caution: like all such predictions, there is no guarantee any of this will come true. Unless of course, you believe in self-fulfilling prophecies.

In January of 2007 a political heavy hitter will declare he is not running for office in the upcoming general election but retiring to South America. Following successful knee surgery he will take up golf with Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez. Under Chavez' influence, he will liquidate his assets and begin distributing his fortune on the Southside in a "Cash for Literacy Program." All recipients have to do is learn to read secret contracts.

On Valentine's Day 2007 a female party stalwart will defeat all challengers in a runoff convention for Central Belize. She will then give an ultimatum to the party executive in which they must give her a key legal position. "First nephew" takes over fort "first son" who goes into real estate after successfully acquiring every business on North Front Street.

In March of 2007 foreign investors will open a new casino/marina facility in Double Head Cabbage. To facilitate access by cruise ships they will dredge the Belize River turning it into a deep water port and build a causeway over to the PGIA. Through a series of misadventures architects in Taiwan who have never been to Belize but who hold permanent residency will misunderstand the drawings provided. They position the mega resort backwards on the property requiring another entrance be cut through the bush and build a causeway to the Chalillo Dam which they mistake for the Rio Hondo. To save face, the project will then be renamed "Double Head Dragon."

In April of 2007 the northern

highway will be adopted by the City of Chetumal and Mexican bus companies will take over the bus runs formerly serviced by a now bankrupt Belizean company. Belizean commuters will be so happy with the new road conditions and service they will park their cars and ride the buses to work, thus beating high fuel prices and getting raffle tickets for a chance to win a shopping spree at Chedraui every month.

In May, the Corozal Commercial Free Zone will be opened to the Belizean public

ambassadorial post vacated by another woman who opts to return home to run against Zenaida Moya in a Belize City division. Marion Jones, retiring from sports, contemplates running as an independent.

In July, gasoline prices will plummet in an attempt by GOB to recover the taxes being lost due to the heavy use of public transportation. Consumers, unwilling to be fooled by a short term ploy, will continue to use Mexican buses and water taxis will start a San Pedro to Belize City to Double Head Dragon daily run.

In August, portions of Belize City by a supermarket on the northern highway will

Haulover Bridge.

In September 2007, visiting Bel-Ams will adopt abandoned children and wayward teenagers as part of a program called "Take Back Belizeans." A data bank will be set up for reuniting families and school friends separated during Hurricane Hattie. Alumni from Technical galvanize and stage a successful protest to reclaim the college before it becomes gets turned into a IT-Vet. There is great rejoicing in the land.

In October 2007, some church officials will attempt to pass legislation banning Halloween and all references to Harry Potter. One denomination will uphold the Potter ban (having already expelled a student in Cayo for imitating the magical teen) but balk at the removal of Halloween since it provides a money making opportunity for school fairs. Trick or treaters get the fright of their lives when a national leader personally hands out candy at his King's Park home. One child is hospitalized.

November 2007 passes uneventfully as no one notices the Belize dollar is devalued during Garifuna Settlement Day Celebrations. No press release is issued.

Ho, ho, ho....and here we go again.

I don't know if you believe in tarot cards yourself...but getting a reading sure can be fun. You didn't really expect true accuracy did you? After all, its only \$5 a pop. Same price as a plate of fried chicken. But more on fried chicken next week.....

"In July, gasoline prices will plummet in an attempt by GOB to recover the taxes being lost due to the heavy use of public transportation..."

in an effort by the customs department to reduce contraband and zone merchants regain customers lost when Mexicans began shopping at Hotchandani & Co (formerly the Pound Yard.)

In June the political leader will reverse his earlier decision announce he IS running for office again. His replacement will have to give up her position and be offered an

break off and float away due to dredging in the area. Several homes, now leaning, will fall over. GOB will declare a state of emergency and "Friends of Belize" will provide US \$6 Billion in emergency relief which will immediately be spent, only no one will know on what exactly. Affected homeowners will be given temporary housing in a new development near the

Attention farmers!

Who se money no grow pan tree?

Acidic soils cost Belizean farmers millions of dollars in reduced crop yields. Scientific studies show that acidic soils (pH < 6) reduces the availability of important nutrients, creates toxic levels of aluminum, iron, and manganese, and damages root systems.

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Bare Facts: The media blackout across the land

By: Trevor Vernon



These past two weekends Belize experienced what can only be classified as a general news blackout, except for the crime reports.

We at this paper are not interested in the glorification of crime. In fact, we consider the glorification of crime a dangerous thing in that it serves only one purpose: the perpetuation of more one-upmanship type of violence.

The lengthy Christmas and New Year weekends brought about a disruption in the way news gets reported in print, on the evening news, and in other media in Belize. Everyone was on vacation so the media mill grinds to a halt. It's a dangerous time in any fragile democracy, especially when the unwashed masses are officially encouraged to indulge in inebriating practices and spend extra-budgetary resources they don't have, to celebrate a religious holiday.

Well, while the nation was out partying

and running up the credit, we learnt, quite by accident of yet another massive increase in the pump prices of regular gasoline. We were not supposed to notice and most didn't, given the state of merry making. We Belizeans have become so numb that we are even afraid to look or ask when we get gas pumped in our tanks. Makes you wonder if butane prices went up too. No one seems to know.

"So we, the citizens must re-pay their loans so they can live large and we are told that we must be happy to endure their pains too. I don't think so; but, most Belizeans appear to be happy with the arrangements the Musa government made."

Yet as a percentage of the illusive "acquisition cost" [the price ESSO/SOL charges to have the stuff delivered here] the governments tax take almost exceeds that cost. Therefore, it can be argued that GOB's take (rrd, environment, & import duty) as of December 26, 2006 (\$3.55 per gallon) is almost 100% of the acquisition cost (\$3.9170). Now, almost half the price you will see at the pump for regular gas represents

government's taxes on fuel. This is a big take and for what? To repair roads? To clean up the environment? To ensure safety standards? No, no, and no. It's to pay off those "sovereign guarantee" loans for the chosen few. So we, the citizens must re-pay their loans so they can live large and we are told that we must be happy to endure their pains too. I don't think so; but, most Belizeans

appear to be happy with the arrangements the Musa government made.

One gentleman suggested that the reason for the high tax rate on gasoline is to pay for road construction and maintenance. Maybe we are in the wrong business because \$3.55 per gallon on 11 million gallons is almost 40 million a year in taxes on regular gasoline alone. To counter his argument, another friend points out, that diesel powered vehicles,

trucks, busses, and heavy equipment take a much heavier toll on our roadways yet diesel is only taxed at 1.24 cents a gallon. You figure that one out.

Then long comes the second long news blackout weekend, which included a closed session of the Belize Senate on December 28, 2006. What have we heard of this very private session? Nothing you say? Naturally. What did you expect: a press release? You didn't get one with the massive new increases in pump prices on Boxing Day or the plane load of deportees that arrived from the USA, did you?

One of the greatest philosophical books of all time, Plato's Republic, instantly comes to mind when writing about news blackouts in Belize today. In book seven Plato lays out in allegorical terms a people being tricked by their leaders and made to live with blinders over their eyes in a cave. It is more popularly known as Plato's Allegory of the Cave. It is timeless writing and the concept so apropos for our most troubling times in Belize today where power loving politicians refuse to heed to the will of the people. And that stuff was written hundreds of years ago. Imagine!

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"Hey Jock! Dis Blue don't giv a damn, e flying blind!"
..... "Buay.....Dis Red just as blinkered!"

JUSTICE GONE

by Des Parrett

I went to see the Old One who lives at the ruins. His hair is white as sea foam, and although he claims that getting older doesn't always mean getting wiser, he is truly a wise one. I had a question for him.

Recently in our village a neighbor was murdered and last week a young woman was raped. I wanted to know which is the most destructive evil to our society? Murder or rape?

"Neither," the Old One replied. "Both murder and rape are savage and

unacceptable, but the greatest evil in any society is dishonest judgments because such judicial action murders our whole justice system. Without justice we can only have anarchy where every person must resort to one's own solutions. Even the most despotic kings and dictators understood that people needed fair courts to settle their differences.

"Our democratic way of life is based upon fair and equal treatment under the law, and justice for all citizens. We find these very words in nearly every constitution of every

democracy in the world. Dishonest judgments destroy fair and equal treatment and thus a democracy can not be sustained.

"Obviously dishonest judgments can result when judges accept money, favors or power to influence their decisions, but dishonest judgments do not always mean dishonest judges. In Belize we have an even more devastating cause of dishonest judgments: NO JUDGMENTS. When our judicial system fails to render timely judgments, the effects are the same as dishonest judgments, but in Belize, this failure is not caused by corrupt judges but instead by corrupt politicians.

Justice must always be the number one priority of every democracy.

Our politicians have ignored the desperate needs of our court system until we now have hundreds of civil court cases moldering on the desks of two or three overloaded judges, an impossible situation that denies our citizens justice, just as much as dishonest judgments. It is common knowledge that it will take three to five years or even more to get a hearing on a civil dispute, and some cases have gone on for as long as ten years. When the case finally ended it was because the plaintiff or defendant died! When thieves, murderers, rapists, drug dealers and the like are not assured immediate court hearings our justice system is sacrificing the rights of our law abiding citizens to protect the rights of evil criminals. Certainly that is not the proper goal of politics.

"It is true that this dreadful situation in Belize, of no recourse to justice, is caused in part by incompetence and corruption of politicians who place a higher priority on their personal projects than on justice, but our justice system itself has to share the blame, being based upon the antiquated, out-of-date, inefficient, ineffective British Common Law supposedly modified by our Constitution. We had the ultimate authority (Privy Counsel) of English tradition overriding our the constitutional authority of our citizens. English Common Law was designed to protect the aristocrat from the commoner, and it has never functioned as a protector of the commoner from the power structure. Our Belize Constitution should be the ultimate, only, and FINAL word with the exception of a Regional Court (CARICOM) attuned to our

culture and values.

"Our Belize antiquated civil court procedures with its powdered wigs, medieval robes, royal bowing to the judge, addressing the judges as 'M'Lord' as if they were some kind of a potentate, no computers, few if any court recorders. . . . as well as low budgets, needs a serious restructuring. We need more judges. We need better judges. We need court dates to be firm and not abused at the whim of senior lawyers who repeatedly call for postponements. We need simple, straight forward and efficient court room procedures based upon mutual respect, instead of the local lord of the manor handing out favors. After all judges are only people hired to do a job of rendering fair and honest judgments; they should certainly be respected but they are not gods. We need proper secretarial help in the courts. The courts should give no more advantage, recognition, privilege or weight to a senior lawyer than to one recently admitted to the Bar. Every citizen should be assured that he is equally represented in the court room no matter what the seniority of his counsel. The court should charge a healthy fee, a thousand or more per day, for all actions using the court rooms, with such charges leveled against the losing party or against anyone causing a delay or postponement.

We need our civil and criminal courts completely separate from one another and operating with the same efficiency and timeliness.

"We need all lawyers to be more accountable to their clients and their actions, and judges accountable for their decisions, all reviewable by a Justice Review Board composed of independent citizens who are NOT members of the Bar Association. And this demands that our judicial system must have an adequate budget to serve our people fully and properly.

"We can correct the problems of our judicial system, the problems of dishonest judgments," concluded the Old One, "if we acknowledge our problems and have the courage to make the necessary changes. If we do not, then murders and rapists will remain far behind dishonest judgments and corrupt politicians in the list of evils that are aggressively destroying our society."

Pothole politricks



by Meb Cutlack

Just how long is it going to take for the poor, and the middle classes of Belize, to finally raise up and refuse to pay their taxes - the only measures left to them to remove the yoke of government taxation from around their necks?

In his column in the Amandala last week Frankie Rhys raised exactly this question: "...the IMF, which appears to be of the opinion that Belize needs to further tighten its belt by increasing taxes or by retrenching Government employees. The people can hardly handle the current situation, much less absorb more punishment from a Government that has blown huge amounts of money by giving favored treatment to its riends and cronies. We need a tax revolt in 2007! Refuse to file. Refuse to pay GST."

He added: "Didn't a refusal to pay taxes trigger the American Revolution?"

Well, last week was certainly a sort of record for Belize when on the very day that oil dropped to a two-year low of \$55 a barrel the price in Belize soared another 40 cents! No announcement, no news release, just a new rise to put the price of gas in Belize to a shade under \$10 a gallon.

Talk about taxation without representation!

The PUP mouthpiece, The Times, has the cheek to criticize local councils for the state of the roads and pot holes. They are PUP potholes with our roads falling daily into worse repair. If just a tiny iota of the gasoline tax went to service potholes instead of private pockets Belize would be in far better shape.

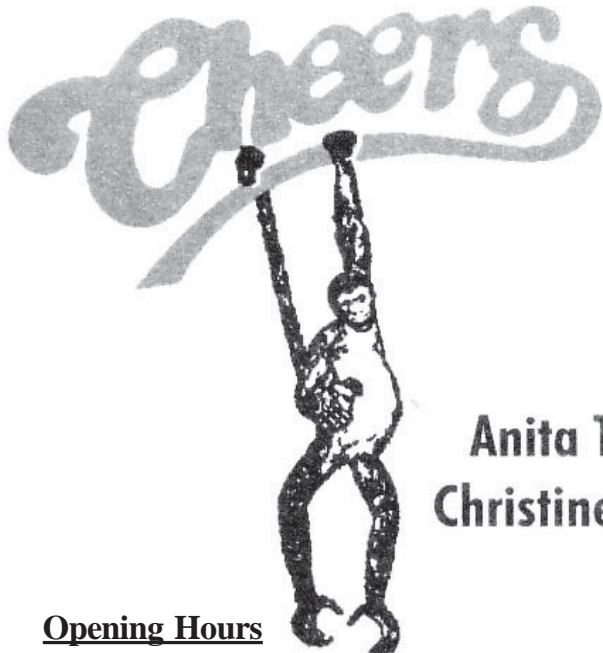
The government has "explained" there is not enough asphalt in Belize to repair the roads and so they are filled with sand and gravel. Of course the first rain washes out the sand and gravel and makes the holes even worse!

How can there not be enough asphalt, or money to buy it? Belizeans are not the only ones using the nation's roads and highways,

nor are they the only ones noticing it. Tourists are scandalized.

And the tourism industry vehicle owners and operators are punishing. All across the country, tourism generates revenue through bed tax, GST and income tax. Not to mention the exorbitant exit tax. All of it pours into 'General Revenue' but NOTHING comes back out for roads and other infrastructure. Let alone schools or other needs.

When will it end? It wont because as Frankie so aptly puts it, "Never let people know that you are broke." If they know, they will squeeze you unmercifully, because they know you have to be desperate, willing to entertain any solution even if it is to your great disadvantage! An individual might be able to conceal his true financial condition if he is an excellent poker player who can sustain a bluff. As far as a nation like Belize? The whole damn world knows!"



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“A challenge: where do the independents stand?”

By Meb Cutlack

They probably stand to win enough seats to dictate policy change if they run as “independents” but could win nothing if they stand as one or two or three “independent” political parties. Belize is crying out for men and woman of integrity to offer themselves to the electorate, to call for “reform!” And to cut out the “party” nonsense that has ruled Belize for so long - and so badly.

To see them now squabbling over who leads an independent party is akin to denying the very basis for which they supposedly stand. Reform, even with a small “r”, is a multi level and multi strategic option which needs intelligent consideration from every quarter and, above all, it ultimately needs personal commitment based on ideals and out of which can emerge a consensus. That consensus must come from legitimate discussion between the possible wedge of independents who take the middle ground - and whichever of the traditional parties, or splinter of, which is prepared

to accept demands for real change. Ironically only Mark Espat and Cordel Hyde have publicly pledged to seek an elected senate and other reforms. The UDP and the sitting PUP are very careful not to mention senate reform and an elected senate—one of the very few ways

top level corruption can, at least, be monitored, even curbed. It is also essential that the senators and representatives are not elected in the same election or at least have a different time period to serve to avoid one party, again and again, taking all power.

INdependent Weekly offers a challenge to all prospective independent candidates throughout Belize to present yourselves and your ideas to the public via our newspaper. All you have to do is:
State you name and constituency
Provide a photograph
Give your reason for running as an independent candidate then give your views on the following:

“INdependent Weekly offers a challenge to all prospective independent candidates throughout Belize to present yourselves and your ideas to the public...”

- A) an elected senate or alternative
- B) land reform with means to take power away from ministers and others to use Belizean land to enrich themselves.
- C) “general revenue”, the government’s large holdall, into which all government revenue is poured and

then redistributed as per the instructions of one or, at most, two men.
D) a new integrity commission to which all ministers, senators and house members must submit all details of their financial and property holdings prior to the elections.
E) review of all recent environmental impact assessments related to ‘mega’ projects.
Finally, give you views on what has gone wrong in Belize since independence with regard to the following:
Education,
Poverty alleviation,
The collapse of southside and rural economies and spread of poverty throughout Belize.
The demise of ecotourism through high departure taxes while cruise ship passengers pay only a pittance to enter Belize—part of which goes to the tourist village and so back to the cruise ship company!
This invitation is open to ALL independent candidates not directly affiliated with an established political party.

Mexico will return to Belize a portion of the territory on the Southern Frontier

Translated from original text from Univision.com (Jan 2, 2007)

It was made known today by the Secretary of External Relations of Mexico that the Government of Mexico will return a portion of territory to Belize that was incorrectly absorbed by Mexico more that a Century ago. The Mexican Chancellor confirmed in a communiqué that this action would be formalized in the future with a new Territorial Agreement with Belize. “An initial agreement has already been reached and all we are waiting for are Belize’s observations on some points in the frontier, for example the Bay of Chetumal, where the actual

treaty signed in July of 1893, with important mistakes, considers a portion that has always been the territory of Belize, as Mexican territory” the Minister went on to say. The Mexican Chancellor points out that from 2003, the Government of Mexico had presented to the Belizean Government a proposed treaty of the border divisions and that this “is currently being evaluated in that country”. Authorities from both nations are presently conducting technical meetings that will permit them to define the basis for the signing of a new treaty, according to the communiqué. On the other hand, the same ministry of the government informed in another communiqué that Mexico and Guatemala are conducting joint studies in an effort to clean up their common borders. This action will permit

conserving and establishing border limitations between the both nations which has an extension of 573 kilometers, according to the secretary. Included in the studies that are being carried out, is the cleaning up and the development of the border areas, and the maintenance of the of international monuments as markers, the establishing of the maritime borders and the stabilizing of the Suchiate river.

**Comments?
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thoughts
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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.

TOPICAL TIDBITS



Xmas Thieves

A Customs office at the northern border wanted a criminally high rate of duty on a bottle of tequila bought in Chet. Although it came with a Mexican receipt for 120 pesos, he wanted the same duty as on a bottle of \$98 tequila bought in Belize.. No matter that the visitor had a British passport and stated his duty rights of a bottle and cigarettes. “Not at a border town!” he was told but when he theatdened to pour the tequila away the officer suggested he cough up a fee of \$5!

But worse still - the wife of a friend of his who works for government drove down from the same border with his blue plated pickup loaded with Xmas goodies illegally bought in the Free Zone.. No duty on anything!

Smoking hot cigarettes

Someone in high places with Chinese connections is making a killing from the import of uncustomed Chinese cigarettes sold openly in Belize.

There is also a blind eye being turned to the import of British packetted Benson

and Hedges sold by shops throughout the country at \$40 Bz a carton.

The public is being being royally smoked by their own countrymen and the government just fans the flames.

Intimidation police style!

Our DPP, Kirk Andeerson has gone. Yes, but he has gone with a strong whiff of police and PUP government intimidation and an embarrassing display of pointless power mongering.

They nabbed him at the airport and returned him under escort to a nearby bank to pay his income tax.

Tut, tut - his salary arrears due in the future and legally secure were much more than the income tax bill!

As well as the money due to him there is inevitably a sum of several thousand dollars for “going quietly”.

Well, they broke their side of the deal and so I suggest that Kirk go anything but quietly and sing, sing, sing all the way to Jamaica.

The INdependent offers hims as much room as he wants to tell the whole story

and clear his name and reputation - won’t that be better than a hand full of stolen money for keeping quiet?

Want to join the U.S. army?



The US armed forces, already unable to meet recruiting goals, are considering expanding the number of non-citizens in the ranks — including proposals to open recruiting stations overseas - and putting more immigrants on a faster track to US citizenship if they volunteer.

Of course, this could be considered recruiting mercenaries to defend US soil! History has it that the Roman Empire collapsed for the same reason - recruits from the colonies who turned on the emperor!!

Guatemala’s makes pledges -again!

Guatemala’s president pledged last week to revive constitutional reforms promised in peace deals that ended the country’s civil war a decade ago, saying Guatemalans must conquer the social inequalities that helped give rise to the

conflict. Little wonder he spoke out!

Guatemala is stranded in a cash crisis that impedes cashing checks, collecting salaries or accessing cash dispensers. The local press says the people are hungry, spending New Year’s Eve amid shortage and distress.”El Periódico” online edition says the Oscar Berger government closed 2006 with devastating effects on the people due to negligence of the Central Bank of Guatemala (BCG).

The paper says the BCG is “shameful to ask the hungry to stay calm. “The crisis affects the majority, including the middle class, rural workers impeded from collecting their salaries, the informal sector impeded from making sales and nearly one million families depending on remittances.

In the days leading up to the 10th anniversary of the UN sponsored Peace deal which ended the civil war Guatemalan leaders have acknowledged that while the Central American country has made some advances in education and health, it has yet to overcome extreme poverty.

Statement from We The People Reform Movement

“This example of changing the Constitution by assembling the wise men of the state, instead of assembling armies, will be worth as much to the world as the former examples we have given it” - Thomas Jefferson 1787.

Once more the current power has again proven to the Belizean people its absolute power and the urgent need for constitutional reform. On Friday, December 08 2006, Cabinet had secured the House approval of two money motions, which was passed on a single sitting even by disrespecting the House rules and by a feeble protest by a weak opposition. On the following Monday, Cabinet had also secured the rubberstamp senate approval for these two money motions to refinance Belize’s foreign debt.

Cabinet has consistently imposed its will on our weak and shackled Parliament and cannot be held responsible or accountable for its acts by a feeble National Assembly.

The PUP architects of the Belize Constitution for an Independent Belize (had also the blessings of the late come UDP) had no intention to yield their newly acquired control and privileges on the destiny of our new nation to the National Assembly even one of their own making. They framed the constitution to allow a Cabinet-Reign with absolute power to be permanently concentrated on the executive. Cabinet absolute power to grant Ministers discretionary powers, to loot and plunder our country, discretionary powers to tax us, to borrow locally and international institutions billions of dollars in our name, discretionary powers to hold and dispose our national wealth, assets and resources at their pleasure.

They have persistently established a large Cabinet with fewer backbenchers in the House to impose their will and a weak opposition that could not even protect itself against gross indignities in a weakened House of Representatives. Cabinet Ministers are also provided with state immunity against punishments for crimes committed against the people. These Honorable Ministers are unaccountable and are unanswerable to the rule of law and to the National Assembly. Why not throw off the cloak that is asphixiating us; “the Cabinet Ministers with discretionary powers and stop this endless punishment.” Nowhere in the world does a smaller cabinet control a larger Parliament. Why should a tiny cabinet of Belize control both Houses of the National Assembly and our lives? We have no other alternative but to propose new constitutional amendments to consolidate Belize Democracy.

We propose new powers of a two-House National Assembly:

- To empower our National Assembly for legislative powers to be vested in a two House (bi-cameral) Assembly. All legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a National Assembly of Belize which shall consist of a Senate and a House of Representatives.
- A New Executive, a Cabinet led by a Prime Minister in order to abolish Cabinet control on both Houses of the National Assembly and insuring the separation of powers, we propose the direct elections for the Prime Minister office with a limited two terms, with constitutional authority to allow the Prime Minister to choose his or her ministers with well experienced and capable individuals from the Belizean public. Elected members of the House shall not be a member of the Executive, effectively ensuring a free House to agree or concur with amendments to any bill proposed by the Executive. An Elected Senate replacing the appointed Rubber Stamp (Powers of an Elected Senate).

- All power to disagree to any bill and may propose or concur with amendments to any money bill as on any other bill. Power to establish within the Senate a Special Senate Investigative Committee capable of withstanding all weather storms.
- The elected Senate shall be constitutionally empowered by establishing a Special Senate Investigative Committee from amongst its elected members. Any party, political movement, or independent represented in the Senate shall be allowed to appoint one Senator (only) to sit on this special Senate Investigative Committee so as to ensure a well balanced and inclusive democratic independent committee free from partisan control and any cover-up or obstruction of justice. On the first sitting of the Senate they shall select a chairman between themselves and the chairmanship shall be on a rotate basis. This Senate Special Investigative Committee shall be legally constituted and sworn in the first sitting of the Senate. Once constituted the members or any member of the Special Senate Investigative Committee may commence any investigation on the misconduct of any former or present government official at the services of the government of Belize and any public contract providing services to the government of Belize. Once substantial evidence arises from any investigation the Senate Special Investigative Committee shall draw charges of impeachment and shall constitute itself into a Senate Tribunal to hear the charges. The Senate Tribunal shall not impose to a convicted offender any prison terms but the immediate removal from public office and shall be banned for life to hold office. If criminal offences has been committed by the convicted offender or offenders, the Senate Tribunal may appoint a special prosecutor to immediately initiate court action for his or her conviction. Establishment of an Independent Judiciary free from political manipulation with a separate budget.
- The Judges of both the higher courts and the lower courts most be well experienced and competent proven attorneys to hold their offices during a fixed term with good behavior.

We believe our recommendations for Constitutional Reform offers a new positive change. Our proposals are for the strict division, control and limitation of power and to restrict the role of the State to the essentials. Only by enactment of the Constitutional changes above will the people of this country rid themselves of the present tyranny and undemocratic behavior of a Cabinet Reign with discretionary powers.

On behalf of We The People Deputy National Coordinator

Lucilo Teck _____
Deputy National Coordinator

We The People Reform Movement P.O. Box 194 Corozal Town
Tel. 409-3004, 6008729

Blessed & Peaceful: 2007

Rev'd Canon LeRoy Flowers

A happy, peaceful, hopeful and joyous 2007 to all our members, friends, and supporters.

What will 2007, bring for us? Are you afraid? What action will you take to make 2007 a blessed one?

Sad to say many see dark days ahead, even among those who claim Jesus as their Lord!! Remember He promised to be with us in the storm of life.

Poverty, hatred, greed, murder, theft and lying will continue unchecked in 2007. Children will belittle their parents, parents will abuse and abandon their children and responsibilities. Within the churches there will continue to be disunity and strife. This is due to our spiritual poverty. Families will continue to fall apart.....domestic violence taking center stage in the wider community while many in the church will talk about love, but never live it...due to their anger and strife in their hearts...

How then can we hope for a meaningful blessed 2007? The answer lies to a great degree with what you and I will do. It is simple, but true! Let us learn to do the following on a daily regular basis:

- Pray more humbly
- Talk less...Listen more
- Practice: Please, Thank You, Excuse Me, Good Day!
- Read some books!
- Watch wholesome movies on T.V.
- Care about all God's children.
- Be responsible at work and in our homes.
- Give respect to all, including our opponents.
- Learn to accept criticism.
- Learn to accept that you are not God, therefore not always right.
- Learn the difference between

making recommendations and making decisions.

- Stop trying to make everyone think and act just like you.
- Spend quality time with yourself and family.
- Strive daily to make this world a better place.
- Stop trying to manipulate others and the system.
- Let us honor the value of work.
- Develop the virtue of patience with the greatest fool! Whoever you think he/she may be!
- Learn to love and accept love. Not everyone is dishonest and wants something from you.
- Practice to forgive all who offend you.
- Be kind and helpful to someone in need every day.
- See your glass as half full rather than half empty.
- Do something about the problem you face rather than complaining.
- Light a candle in the dark rather than curse the darkness
- Try to be more considerate and kind to all you meet.
- Stop believing that you are the only right, honest person in the world...and that others are trying to destroy you.

My brothers and sisters, I have no fear of the future; because I know who holds the future - His grace is sufficient for us to face the future with confidence!!!

Yes many things will go wrong in 2007...But He has the whole world in His hands...then why fear? ..sickness, death, pain and suffering are an integral part of life in 2007...But he is still God and loves each one in a special way.

I am saddened that we are growing to be a complaining and ungrateful people. We must learn to appreciate God's goodness and blessings. We must also lean to be thankful as individuals and as a people in general., yes correct what is wrong.

I find it so sad that many never appreciate their family and friends, much less , the goodness of God in their lives. No time to say thanks, no time for worship, no time to pray, no time for fun, no time for appreciation for the goodness of life itself., no time for others, no time for laughter.....No wonder we are all so angry with each other and even with God.....2007 will be a blessed one for us ...If we walk with Jesus ...the Lord and Saviour..... Ourselves and God.

However Jesus pointed out

“I will be with you to the end of the world.” It is vital that we become involved in our own wellbeing and happiness. Our happiness should never be controled by others.



We have a vested interest in working for our own happiness. By becoming engaged in the wellbeing of others, we will add to our happiness and thus make Belize a better society.

It is not about them, it is about us. Thus a blessed 2007.

Selling out...

☞ (Continued From Page 3)
cross the border to vote illegally should be arrested along with those who caused them to cross the border.

The buying— or stealing—of political offices should be prohibited by criminal penalties. Any legislator that has failed or refused to support legislation for such penalties may well be a candidate with the same criminal thinking that leads to corruption. Such thinking process should lead to his or her disqualification to hold office.

It is time that the Prime Minister and his cabinet provides the guidance he says is what leadership is all about and put into effect legislation they would end illegal

voting and vote buying. It is time the issue is addressed by the so-called Good Governance department.

For its part, although the UDP does not have a majority in the House of Representatives, it is not relieved of the responsibility to try and enact any anti-corruption legislation recommended by the Political Reform Commission. If the PUP does not support the legislation proposed by the UDP then the voters know who not to vote for.

They say you get what you pay for. Perhaps Belizeans are finally getting the sense that they are getting what they were **paid** for. As the Association of Concerned Belizeans says “No sell u vote!”

The price is simply too high.

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Oil Exploration Threatens Belize’s Protected Areas

By **Alana Herro**

Published on *Worldwatch Institute*
(<http://www.worldwatch.org>)
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By permitting oil exploration on indigenous lands, the government of Belize is violating international human rights law and possibly several other international treaties, according to the environmental group *Global Response* [1]. The group says the government’s April 2006 decision to allow Texas-based *U.S. Capital Energy* [2] to conduct seismic operations in Sarstoon Temash National Park, the country’s second largest protected area, is in breach of a 2004 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ruling and may also violate Belize’s treaty obligations under the *Ramsar Convention on Wetlands* [3] and the *United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity* [4].

Belize, a Central American country roughly the size of Belgium, boasts more than 90 protected areas and has an international reputation for conservation and nature-based tourism. Over the past decade, however, the government has issued licenses for logging, oil exploration,



Sarstoon Temash National Park. Photo: SATIIM

and other extractive activities in areas that have traditionally been home to Belize’s indigenous Mayan communities, including Sarstoon Temash National Park, a 41,000-acre (16,592 hectare) area of pristine forests and coastline along the southern border with Guatemala.

In 1998, two native rights groups, the U.S.-based *Indian Law Resource Center* [5] and the *Toledo Maya Cultural Council*

[6], filed a petition to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (ICHR) arguing that by granting logging and oil concessions in indigenous territories without local consultation, the Belizean government was violating certain rights guaranteed under the American Declaration of the Rights and Duties of Man. In October 2004, the ICHR ruled [7] in favor of the petitioners, concluding

that the failure of the government to consult with the Mayan people, and the negative environmental effects arising from the concessions, constituted violations under international human rights law.

Global Response and local groups say the allowance of new oil exploration in Sarstoon Temash National Park is in direct contravention of this ruling. Since 2003, the government of Belize and the *Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management* [8] (SATIIM), a group that represents five Q’eqchi Maya and Garifuna indigenous communities in the area, have managed the park jointly. But Greg Ch’oc, executive director of SATIIM, observes that when it comes to certain decisions, outside money has more clout than local governance—or even international law. “A wealthy foreign corporation can set off dynamite and extract oil without an environmental impact assessment or a mitigation plan,” he says. “This selective application of the law is a violation of the human rights of the indigenous people in Belize.”

At the request of SATIIM, Colorado-based Global Response is launching a letter-writing [9] campaign to Belizean Prime Minister Said Musa to stop the destruction of biodiversity and indigenous livelihoods in the park. Sarstoon Temash includes 10 miles (16 kilometers) of Caribbean coastline and encompasses 14 ecosystem types, including undisturbed mangrove forest, the only comfra palm forest in Belize, and the only known lowland sphagnum moss bog in Central America. The park is home to a known 226 species of birds, 24 species of mammals, 22 species of reptiles, and 46 species of butterflies.

This story was produced by *Eye on Earth* [9], a joint project of the Worldwatch Institute and the *blue moon fund* [10]. View the *complete archive* [10] of Eye on Earth stories, or contact Staff Writer Alana Herro at [aherro \[AT\] worldwatch \[DOT\] org](mailto:aherro@worldwatch.org) with your questions, comments, and story ideas.

Source URL:
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Links:
[1] <http://globalresponse.org/index01.php>
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[5] <http://www.indianlaw.org/>
[6] <http://geography.berkeley.edu/projectsresources/MayanAtlas/MayaAtlas/tmcc.htm>
[7] <http://www.cidh.org/annualrep/2004eng/belize.12053eng.htm>
[8] <http://www.satiim.org.bz/index.htm>
[9] <http://globalresponse.org/graph.php?i=current>
[10] <http://www.blumoonfund.org/>

Unfinished Business

By **Trevor Vernon**

Rather than write my predictions for 2007, let’s take stock of issues hanging over from 2006 and before that need to be resolved this year.

- 1) dfc/ssb investigatiion findings
- 2) judiciary strengthening
- 3) increased tax revenue, which will come principally from taxing pump prices for regular unleaded fuel
- 4) integrity commission; when will

- the public figures file their annual re ports?
- 5) Bz-Guate slippery slope adjacency zone issue
- 6) Mex-Bz treaty issues on border delimitation arising out of # 5 above
- 7) Bz-Honduras maritime issues
- 8) Elections floodgate pressures will become an issue in 07
- 9) IMF/WB fiscal imbalance pressure i
- 10) Tourism “golden goose”

- 11) Shrimp Farming...Nova has a l r e a d y stumbled, but not Sir Barry & his Big Warts in the south
 - 12) Shrimp trawler banning
 - 13) Fisherman revolt: esp against developers wanting to kick them off their strategically positioned premises at the mouth of the river
 - 14) trade union rebellion issues
 - 15) political infighting and backbiting
 - 16) runaway fuel tax
 - 17) regularized tax evasion by the wealthy few
 - 18) high interest rates
 - 19) parallel market/money laundering with international law enforcement
 - 20) EIA issues particularly with Ara Macao, Stake Bank, and North Drowned Cayes,
 - 21) increased tax measures on the poor (See IMF letter of December 20)
 - 22) Venezuela & Taiwan payback
 - 23) The free port development with the Lucas Cruise Lines.
- Of course, there are many more, but 23 is a good number to start with.

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México reintegrará a Belice una porción de territorio en la frontera sur

Original Text from Univision.com
02 de Enero de 2007, 06:47pm ET
México, 2 ene (EFE).- El Gobierno mexicano reintegrará a Belice una porción de territorio que equivocadamente fue mal delimitada hace más de un siglo, informó oy la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores. La Cancillería mexicana precisó en un comunicado que esta acción se concretará en el futuro con un nuevo tratado de límites con Belice. “En principio ya se logró un acuerdo inicial y sólo faltan las observaciones de Belice en algunos puntos de la frontera, como por ejemplo la Bahía de Chetumal, donde el tratado vigente celebrado

en julio de 1893, con equívocos importantes, considera una porción que siempre ha sido de Belice como territorio mexicano”, sostuvo el ministerio. La cancillería mexicana recordó que desde 2003 el Gobierno mexicano presentó a Belice la propuesta de trazo de la Línea Divisoria, y que “se encuentra en proceso de evaluación en ese país”. Las autoridades de ambas naciones se encuentran en reuniones “técnicas”, lo que permitirá definir las bases de la suscripción de un tratado de límites en tre ambas naciones, según el comunicado. Por otra parte, la misma dependencia gubernamental informó en otro comunicado que México y Guatemala realizan conjuntamente trabajos de limpieza en la frontera común. Esta acción permite conservar y definir la delimitación entre ambas naciones, cuya extensión es de 573 kilómetros, según la Secretaría. Entre los trabajos que se desarrolla están la limpieza de la brecha fronteriza, la construcción y el mantenimiento de monumentos limítrofes internacionales, la delimitación de la frontera marítima y la estabilización del río Suchiate.

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A sign of service and quality is our business

Jungle Walk

In our continuing series on the birds of Belize, this week the INdependent brings you the jacana, courtesy the popular field guide “Jungle Walk” by Katie Stevens.

There are eight species of this lively little lily-pad trotter, only one of which resides in the marshes, ponds and other waters of Belize—wherever floating aquatic plants thrive. The Northern jacana (*Jacana spinosa*) is locally known as “Georgie Bull” despite its dainty grace as it hops on its long and spindly toes in search of water bugs, or tiny fish, or small mollusks. It stalks the water hyacinth and steals its seeds.

This slender bird attains a top-to-tail length of about 9-10". It is cinnamon-red with a vivid yellow forehead shield on

its black head and yellow-greenish patches on its wings. With neck extended and long legs dangling as it flies it flashes the yellow underpinion of its rounded wings. As it alights, it stretches high its wings before folding them



neatly behind its back, tucking in the spurs at the crook of its wings.

The immature jacana is gray-brown above and whitish below with a distinctive wide white stripe above the eye.

Jacana

Along with the jacana's generally charming appearance goes a voice of many songs—most of them raucous. It calls out with a single, rasping note. Or emits a plaintive whistle. Or clacks away like a portable typewriter. In flight it makes a sharp cackle. In argument with its fellows, it chatters and chuckles. Jacanas are eminently noisy!

The breeding season is in April and May. A floating platform is contrived of stems and reeds; upon this thin, flat, flimsy surface as many as four eggs are laid, each spotted and speckled in excellent imitation of the nest. It is the male jacana which does most of the egg-sitting—a matter of 22-24 days—and, when they have hatched, he continues on with the baby-sitting, while he is at it.

You can see jacanas on Bird's Isle.

Private Listing

Lake Gardens, Ladyville

“Chalet d’ Eve”



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- * **Hurricane shelter with metal windows and ferro concrete roof**

- * 1000 gallon water collection backup cistern
- * reverse osmosis water system for potable drinking water

GARDEN

- * decorative plants & 20 fruit trees
- * pagoda
- * external electrical outlets and faucets

SECURITY

- * 6' security fence
- * motion detector spotlights
- * off street parking for one or two cars
- * privacy of cul-d-sac living on private estate

LOCATION

Just 20 minutes from Belize City, 7 minutes to International Airport close to grocery shopping and 2 banks

Taxes-- approx BZ \$200/year property taxes (fully paid up)

PRICING

property appraised at \$ 420,000 but ask for details



VIEWING

by appointment only

Please call Trevor @ 600-1627

<p>1/2 acre lots in Burrel Boom starting at \$10K Call 600-1627 for details</p>	<p>10 acre plots in Burrel Boom starting at \$50K Call 600-1627 for details</p>	<p>12 acre plots in Ladyville starting \$120,00050K Call 600-1627 for details</p>
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Letter to the Editor

☛ (Continued From Page 2)
out in the Reporter, Saturday Dec 30.

Destruction of the mangrove destroys the nurseries for the big fish that inhabit the reef—so, No Mangrove = No Fish; also, no dolphins, no manatees, we could fill the entire page with creatures affected by destruction of the mangrove. Humans are one of those creatures too.

Yes we can see other countries around this world are now trying to replant their mangrove—good luck to them as it is very

expensive & difficult. Maybe Dept of Forestry should do the job that we taxpayers pay them for and protect the mangrove, quick before it's all gone.

In the past, people had to get permission to put in a small cut for boats through the mangrove—my family did this about 15 years ago. Now the big developers can just come in & fill the mangrove like it's a garbage dump.

Take a look at the Placencia Peninsula. Mangrove once lined the entire length of

the Placencia Lagoon, this was once a pristine area.

Indeed, Dept of Environment actually seems to like this sort of clear-cutting & filling of the mangrove. Protecting the mangrove is not their job, as they have told me many times this past year.

So I contact Forestry—if you would like to hear a very sleepy voice answer your phone call, call the Forestry Dept! They are snoozing on the job!—the job that we pay them for. The sleepy voice will tell you they can't do anything. And probably they cannot, since our own Area Representative Rodwell Ferguson is actively giving away huge tracts of mangrove to his friends & family.

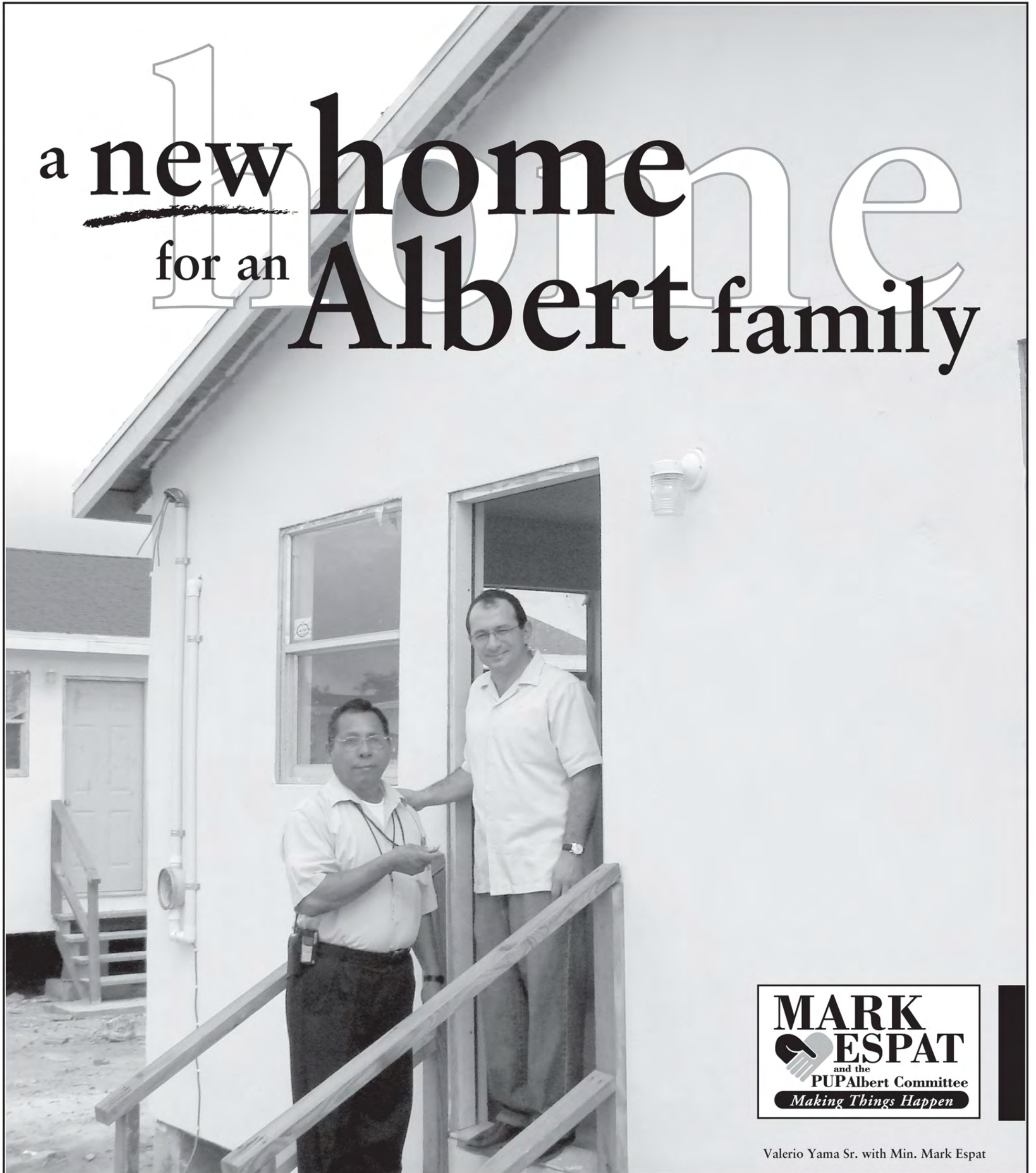
The destruction is shocking. Now Rodwell is trying hard to convince the residents here that Ara Macao, the infamous giant development with plans to put 2 poisonous golf courses on the mangrove which will drain its poisons & fertilizers into the Placencia Lagoon, is good for us!

Again, we may look like barefoot beach bums but we are all very well instructed about our environment. We know Ara Macao is a huge mistake, and will probably mean total destruction of the Placencia Lagoon as we know it, not to mention destruction of the entire Peninsula.

Peace.

Signed: Linn from the Peninsula

a new home for an Albert family



Valerio Yama Sr. with Min. Mark Espat



ARIES
(Mar. 21-April 20)
One sided attractions are likely. Secret love affairs may be enticing; however, you must be prepared for the restraints that will follow. Get involved in activities that will be fun for the whole family. Romance is likely if you can bring yourself to go out with friends.

TAURUS
(Apr. 21-may 21)
Make sure that new mates live up to your high standards. Don't be shy to promote your own interests. Take a close look at any contracts you've signed in order to be sure exactly where you stand. Do not overspend on entertainment. You could find that children will be a handful.

GEMINI
(May 22-June 21)
You may find that children are not as accepting as you have been. You will get along well in social situations. You can make excellent career moves if you are open to the opportunities that exist. You should be in business for yourself.

CANCER
(June 22-July 22)
Things at home may be somewhat rocky. You can make progress professionally. Visitors are likely to drop by and chances are, they may even stay a little longer than you want them to. You may have problems with skin, bones, or teeth if you haven't been taking proper care of yourself.

LEO
(July 23-Aug 22)
Your high energy will enable you to enlist the help of those in a position to back you. Be sure not to reveal private information to the wrong individuals. You could experience delays in shipments or mail, and should be careful while traveling. Delve a little deeper if you really want to know the score.

VIRGO
(Aug. 23-Sept. 23)
Changes in your domestic scene are evident. You can make money through your creative efforts. Business conducted in your own office will proceed smoothly. Don't get involved in joint ventures.

LIBRA

(Sept. 24 -Oct. 23)
Plan some family outings. Don't be too quick to judge your position or surroundings at work. Keep on your toes when dealing with others. A passionate party for two might be just the remedy.

SCORPIO
(Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)
You can make life easier for an older member of your family. Take the time to do your job correctly or you may find yourself looking for a new one. Try to curb your habits, or you could find yourself in an awkward financial position. Be diplomatic when dealing with in-law.

SAGITTARIUS
(Nov. 23 -Dec. 21)
Your lover will cost you dearly if you let them. This will be a very hectic day if you've made promises to too many people. The great outdoors will allow you to teach youngsters some of the things you learned when growing up. Spend some quality time with the one you love. Your talents will shine at work.

CAPRICORN
(Dec 22- Jan. 20)
Your partner may not understand your mood swings but if you are willing to communicate, a lot of grief can be avoided. Drastic changes regarding your personal attitude are evident. Be careful when dealing with investments. Dealing with foreigners will be most enlightening.

AQUARIUS
(Jan. 21 -Feb. 19)
Opportunities to pamper yourself may unfold. You should be in business for yourself. You can make new friends by taking part in social events involving colleagues. Spend time getting into physical activities with your lover.

PISCES
(Feb. 20-Mar. 20)
Conflicts over joint finances are likely. Be sure to look into travel opportunities that will provide you with mental stimulation. Don't get involved in joint ventures. You can make a serious attempt at quitting those bad habits that you've picked up over the years.

Bare Facts:

➡ (Continued From Page 5)
We have the constitutionally recognized Opposition, in this case the only other “mass party”. Their job and especially their leader’s job is to play watchdog and to guard the people’s interest, all the people. . .not just personal interests. But we are not getting a ferocious or alarm sounding watchdog outside of House Meetings; all we seem to be getting is contented and calculated callousness. The most ferocious guardian of the people’s interest is Wave Radio (Morning Show & Kenny’s afternoon show). Nothing else in the Opposition’s arsenal comes close to taking care of the people’s business on a daily basis. Yes, they get personal at times but they also get the attention in alerting Belizeans to the hocus pocus the government pulls on us, all of us who have to pay \$9.66 a gallon for regular gasoline that only cost then \$3.9170 to import.

There was a time at the OAS in 2001, where delegations sat to hammer out the drafting of the Inter-American Democratic Charter at the US’ dogged insistence. What was most appalling to my mind was the fact that the USA-lead sessions refused to enshrine in that charter the vital role of the media as a “main pillar” of democratic governance. Yes, it was thrown in there as an afterthought somewhere; but, not as a pillar, a vital element. As fate would have it, at precisely the same minute foreign ministers & their representatives were signing this glorified Charter in Peru on 9/ 11, terrorist planes were flying into and taking out the twin towers in New York City and the Pentagon in Virginia. And who

made the rest of world aware of the madness that was occurring in an effort to “preserving law & order and democracies worldwide?” The media. How ironic, I remembered saying to myself. Without responsible media reports we have not even the pretense of democracy, period.

Therefore one could make a very strong case that the current government is not a very democratic one precisely because they withhold so much vital information from the public and sneak in new revenue measures, among other things over long holidays. They may participate in “Freedom of Information” seminars abroad, and signed the Inter-American Democratic Charter, but they don’t really support freedom of information. We hear of many Belizeans being deported from the USA during December but we can’t get a comment from anyone about the numbers or the type of criminal behavior they are being deported for. Instead all we hear is the gangs have agreed to a government sponsored truce. Next thing you know, the government will amend the constitution to give the street level criminal element a seat in the senate, alongside the churches, unions, and the private sector.

They may have gone though the paces to get elected, but without the free flow of information to the public through the media establishments all we have must be classified as totalitarian. So, yes I can see why governments in this hemisphere feel the need to downplay the role of the media when negotiating heavy handed Charters and that collective action has served this Musa Government very well indeed.

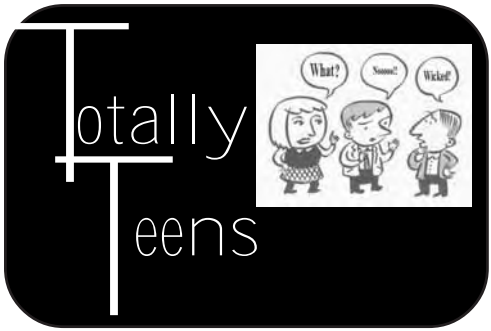
Hunt for good food With Anthony Hunt



Suly’s Restaurant Farmer’s Market

I have saved this review till now for fear of the mad rush that might ensue, but why hold back on the best place in town? There is only one place to get Conch Soup and this is it. All the regulars rush into the purple place before the lunch crowd because after 12:15 the “Best Conch Soup in Town” might be gone. But if it is, you still won’t be disappointed, the rice and beans with the usual sides are truly some of the best around, and the Chimole is great. Suly’s has been dishing up the belly full for years now and it has become the place of choice for the area diners and for a few politicians who try to sneak in before everyone at 11am. During one of my Stew Beef runs, I commented to a frequent visitor that I see him there every time I come. His reply “ Cho! I come ya at least 4 times a week, but please no tell mi wife, she tink I deh da Subway!” Amen! So don’t miss the true taste of Belize, Suly’s. *Daily Specials, Lunch & Dinner \$5.50 & up*

Fly Tropic Air - Fly Tropic Air - Fly Tropic Air
“The Airline Of Belize”



Back to school humor

Back to school

Little Johnny had finished his Christmas vacation and gone back to school. Two days later his teacher phoned his mother to tell her that he was misbehaving. “Wait a minute,” she said. “I had Johnny with me for three weeks and I never called you once when he misbehaved.”

Where is your homework?

Teacher: Where is your homework?
Pupil: I lost it fighting this kid who said you weren’t the best teacher in the school

Who is this calling?

A high school has a policy that the parents must call the school if a student is to be absent for the day. Kelly (name changed to protect the guilty), deciding to skip school and go to Chetumal with her friends waited until her parents had left for work and called the school herself. This is the actual conversation of the telephone call.
Kelly: “Hi, I’m calling to report that Kelly so-and-so is unable to make it to school today because she is ill.
Secretary at high school: “Oh, I’m sorry to hear that. I’ll note her absence. Who is this calling?”
Kelly: “This is my mother.”

Better Grades

Little Johnny wasn’t getting good marks in school. One day he surprised the teacher with an announcement. He tapped her on the shoulder and said, “I don’t want to scare you, but my Daddy says if I don’t start getting better grades...somebody is going to get a spanking!”

School Excuses

The following are excuse notes from parents (including original spellings)

My son is under a doctor’s care and should not take P.E. today. Please execute him.

Please excuse Lisa for being absent. She was sick and I had her shot.

Dear School: Please excuse John being absent on Jan. 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and also 33.

Please excuse Gloria from Jim today.

Please excuse Roland from P.E. for a few days. Yesterday he fell out of a tree and misplaced his hip.

John has been absent because he had two teeth taken out of his face.

Carlos was absent yesterday because he was playing football. He was hurt in the growing part.

Megan could not come to school today because she has been bothered by very close veins.

Chris will not be in school cus he has an acre in his side.

Please excuse Ray Friday from school. He has very loose vowels. (Squirts)

Please excuse Tommy for being absent yesterday. He had diarrhea and his boots leak.

Irving was absent yesterday because he missed his bust.

I kept Billie home because she had to go Christmas shopping because I don’t know what size she wear.

Please excuse Jennifer for missing school yesterday. We forgot to get the Sunday paper off the porch, and when we found it Monday, we thought it was Sunday.

Sally won’t be in school a week from Friday. We have to attend her funeral.

Please excuse Jason for being absent yesterday. He had a cold and could not breed well.

Please excuse Mary for being absent yesterday. She was in bed with gramps. and under the doctor.

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

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