

# The Independent

*Reformer* *Belize's Rebel Paper*

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## Blue notes for blue votes

This past Sunday's turnout in Belize's northern-most border town proved once more that political cash handouts to starving, marginalized Belizeans can still buy the PUP a lot of love. At least for the day.

Despite all the scandal of the past months, desperate Belizeans turned out in droves to collect their "per diems", food coupons, and refreshments from PUP street captains organizing the flotillas to Corozal.

It was no lobsterfest, but busloads of people cashed in on the free-food, free liquor, and free t-shirts, not to mention free dollars. But is this lease-a-crowd just taking the money and planning to vote their mind during the General Election like they did during the municipal and village council elections?

That has to have the PUP wondering. Do they really love us, or just the money? This thought has got to have them feeling blue because they really don't know. Do they?

Almost as blue as having Said Musa lead their party yet again, with no real challengers being tolerated by the man who would be king for a third term. Not willing to play hypocrite, the one man who could have been a viable contender, and perhaps one of the few PUP's left who could inspire confidence in Belizeans both at home and abroad, Mark Espot, steered clear of the whole convention charade.

Why bother going, since everything at this leadership convention had already been hashed out days before and voting by delegates as much a rubber stamp affair as a Senate meeting on a "money matter bill". Nope, absolutely no surprises. Briceno & his crew retain the



*Ex-Deputy Prime Minister John Briceno is still Deputy PUP Party Leader!*

territories they had before and were effectively neutralized from exercising any bid for real leadership and all rebellious area reps were "Ralphed" in once more.

Yes, despite the bankruptcy of the entire country, the PUP is somehow in the money once more and ready to buy votes from anybody who's got one for sale. Party before country — blue notes for blue votes...long live Chavez and his plata.

Covenant Movement, on the other hand were a bit naïve, we think, to be forced to compete with both a festive lobsterfest and a big money national convention by one of the mass political

parties. Lobsterfest goers are the prime target audience for the Movement. Plus, people have been frightened into thinking that their kidnapping could be next, if they get too close to Mr. Aikman. Just ask the womenfolk with families.

The PUP didn't promise the people of Belize anything new that they haven't promised before; and, really it was just a political orgy of confidence building measure for their insiders.



*Derek Aikman at the launch of his Covenant Movement.*



*PNP Leader Will Mehia came all the way from PG for Covenant launch.*



*WTP's Hipolito Bautista in solidarity with Covenant movement members.*

## BSI ashes fly



*Orange Walk residents subjected to flying ash from the smokestacks at BSI's Tower Hill Sugar Factory (see Tidbits page 9).*

Read Independent Online at <http://belizenews.com/independent> or <http://tinyurl.com/245dpp>



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Freedom of  
Information? PUC  
Fails to Answer  
Questions on the Vaca  
Dam

Over two weeks ago, I wrote Mr. Roberto Young, Chairman of the Public Utilities Commission concerning approval for construction of the Vaca Hydroelectric Facility. Under the law, Belize Electric Company Limited (BECOL) must apply to the Public Utilities Commission, PUC, for a license and permission to build and operate the Vaca Dam.

No such application, permission or license appears anywhere on the PUC or the BEL websites and we have not seen any notice in the paper as to an application being filed, or a license being granted.

After seeing the statement released by Belize Electric Company Ltd. (BECOL), dated May 30, 2007, we requested information from the PUC.

BECOL wrote: "Belize Electric Company Limited (BECOL) has received all

major approvals for construction of the BZ\$105 million Vaca Hydroelectric Facility and has commenced activities at the site."

I asked the PUC if BECOL applied for the required permission to construct and operate the Vaca Hydroelectric Facility? I asked if a license and permission had been granted by the Public Utilities Commission?

I asked for any and all documents upon which the permission and license were granted, if they were granted.

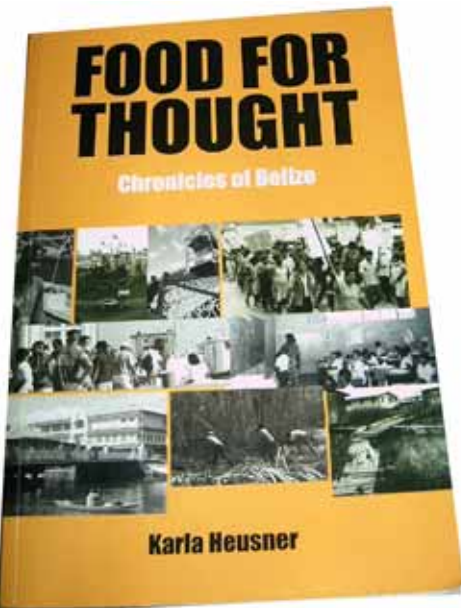
Those are fairly straightforward questions and requests that should not take any time to answer. It is a simple question - was the law followed and, if so, what was the decision based on?

Candy Gonzalez  
Cayo

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**GraceKennedy (Belize) Ltd.**

## **Celebrating 25 years of Belizean enterprise**

Open any kitchen cupboard in Belize and you will find us. That's because GraceKennedy Belize sales and distribution agents have spent the last quarter of a century creating a distribution network. A network so strong and wide that Belizeans don't have to go any further than their corner shop to find their favorite Grace and Colgate-Palmolive products, Teddies diapers, Suretox insecticides, Devon biscuits, and other fine lines distributed by the people at GraceKennedy Belize.

The 25th anniversary of GraceKennedy Belize coincides with the excitement of the 85th anniversary of GraceKennedy Limited, which began in Jamaica and then branched out to many different countries across the region, but make no mistake—Grace Belize is very much a Belizean company. It has been since its startup in 1982 by Roberto Espat Sr. the founder and a major shareholder of GraceKennedy Belize.

Twenty five years later, it boasts a staff of over 45 dedicated, proud Belizeans with one of the country's youngest and most energetic management teams headed by General Manager, Alberto Young.

Grace Belize ranks as the third largest distributor/exporter in the country; but in terms of customer loyalty, GraceKennedy Belize is number one. For even as Belizeans have increasingly wider selections from competing products, they continue to look to GraceKennedy Belize for the quality products they have relied on for years accepting no cheap substitution.

What's more, GraceKennedy Belize not only imports what Belizeans want and need, GraceKennedy Belize is an exporter to the Caribbean with the best Belize has to offer. In past years it has worked with cooperatives and local farmers to sell their red kidney beans, black-eyed peas, marine products and citrus concentrate to markets in Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, and Barbados. Today it continues to work closely with the Citrus Products of Belize Ltd. to seek export markets for Belizean orange and grapefruit concentrate.

GraceKennedy Belize also has its Sno-Brite Bleach and Grace Vinegar bottled in Belize and continues to seek out producers who can package foods under the Grace label.

GraceKennedy Belize prides itself in the development of its employees and continuously seeks to establish programs that will benefit employees. GraceKennedy Belize is one of the very few companies that provides a variable salary and profit sharing scheme for its employees among other benefits like a retirement fund, training programs, medical and life insurance, and educational assistance.

Its management team is focused on motivation and continuously strives to create an environment of teamwork and camaraderie. Its family day and quarterly employee socials are special events which encourage positive attitudes and teamwork in employees at Grace Belize.

Notable Belizeans have contributed to the development of the mother company, GraceKennedy and Company Ltd. over the years. Amauri Rafael Diaz, born and raised in the Cayo district was one of GK's most influential executives, taking up an accounting post at the head office in Kingston in 1969 and rising to become the CEO of GraceKennedy & Co. Limited and Chairman of the Board until he retired in 2005.

In 1989 a reporter from the Jamaica Gleaner asked him what direction he believed the Jamaican economy should take. His reply: "What really is required is foreign exchange. My advice to Government is to focus on an export-led economy."

Mr. Gilroy Graham is another Belizean who is helping to shape GraceKennedy & Company Ltd. and also GraceKennedy Belize. Gilroy Graham joined GraceKennedy Belize in 1991 and was transferred to World Brands in Jamaica in June of 2004 where he now holds the position of General Manager.

Clearly Belizean business ingenuity has been important to GraceKennedy, both in Jamaica and Belize.

As we celebrate our 25th anniversary, GraceKennedy Belize is proud to have established itself as a leader in the distribution/export industry. Our success is due to the support of all our customers, large and small, and our commitment to them. We proudly share our company's values: "My Word is My Bond," "The Promise That is Kept," Ethics and Integrity, Respect and Consideration, Commitment and Openness.

During the month of July, GraceKennedy Belize will host several activities starting with a church service at the Open Door Church on Sunday, July 1, 2007 to be attended by all its employees, launch of a Salvation Army school feeding program, consumer specials throughout the month, samplings and other consumer activities, and a grand Customer Appreciation sale on July 14, 2007 at the GraceKennedy compound.

GraceKennedy Belize invites all Belizeans to celebrate its anniversary and thanks all its customers for allowing us to be a part of their lives, as they serve their family meals, maintain their homes and produce agricultural and marine products for the regional export market.

**Grace – Great relationships among customers and employees**





# Coming Home



**By: Karla Heusner Vernon**

Every once in a while I get a query from a Belizean abroad who is thinking of retiring “back home.” Most of the time I am tempted to just shout: “NO! don’t do it! Stay where you are, you are safer there! Save yourself while there is still time!”

But instead I usually say, very rationally, “Well, life here has its challenges and I would recommend you not sell your house in the US for a few months, see if you like it here again....”

As I speak, I secretly imagine myself at their knees begging, “Please let me come live with you, I won’t take up a lot of room and I can write up stuff you want written up or something. Earn my

keep. You do have air conditioning, don’t you?”

Part of me is sure they just don’t know how good they have it “up there” or how

being chopped off their futures as citizens of the new global economy, many older Belizeans abroad feel nostalgic about the land they left and

**Certainly they are not always welcomed back with open arms; sometimes it is more like open palms.**

bad we have it “down here.” If they did, they wouldn’t want to come back.

Or maybe they still would. Believing as so many of us do that the grass is always more verdant and luscious somewhere else, that surely there is better grazing in the very place which we happen not to be at the moment. If only we relocated, life would be better for us...

Besides, when a person is intent on doing something, no amount of counsel will counsel them out of it; they will hear what they want to hear and reject the rest as unnecessary negativity.

So just as many young students and workers fervently believe every additional day they remain in Belize is another day

grow eager to spend their retirement time helping “develop the country.”

Of course, there is no reason they should not. Should not come home, should not help improve or change things, or—most of all, believe they can and should do these things. Belize on a whole does need them, Belizeans on an individual level do need them.

To me, it’s more a question of whether or not Belize and Belizeans appreciate them when they do come.

Certainly they are not always welcomed back with open arms; sometimes it is more like open palms. I have spoken to some who came

home only to find themselves regarded as some sort of bank or lending agency. For loans never to be repaid, in cash or goods. Their possessions just seem to walk away, the victim of the “E’neva mid di use it anyway,” syndrome. Rationalized by the “E could get wa next one when e go back up. Den tings cheap da States.”

I have met a few Belizeans who came home but have already gone back again disillusioned. Beaten down by a rougher lifestyle than they remembered or could get adjusted to once more—the heat, the mosquitoes, the poor roads and capricious service, the high cost of living, the threat of bodily harm or constant break-ins.

Sometimes they just grow weary of being regarded as some sort of alien in their own homeland. A person betwixt and between, not an American, but somehow no longer perceived as 100% Belizean, just because they have lived and loved and worked somewhere else. Somewhere else so many Belizeans wish they were living and loving and working.

(Please Turn To Page 5)





# Coming Home

☞ (Continued From Page 4)

Is it a case of envy? Certainly to some degree. Is there some anger too? Yes, I believe so. Anger at being abandoned, left to cope on our own without their brainpower, their muscle.

But we can hope this relationship, not unlike the love-hate relationships many Caribbean nationals face in the wider diaspora, is improving. We hope that the gap between how our Belizeans abroad believe we are living and how we are actually living is narrowing. The internet and access to news and radio talk shows is certainly helping to give them a more accurate picture of our lives. The blind spot perhaps is greater on this end, as so many Belizeans think the lives of those in the US is just filled with shopping and partying; failing to understand just

how many long hours of hard work is required and what kind of sacrifices have to be made to maintain a certain lifestyle, and send home those remittances every month.

Yes, there is a two way flow happening now, people going away and people coming home. There is no way to stop the ones who want to leave, who believe it is for the better, and no way to stop those who want to come home, who believe this too is for the better.

Who am I to discourage either set? Who am I, who has also glimpsed greener grass on both sides?

Come home if you will, go away if you must. Just don't forget where you learned Creole and who makes the best rice and beans. Just don't forget your family and friends, wherever they may happen to be at the moment...



Belize City, June 21, 2007.

CMA CGM now launches its weekly Maya Express Service to Belize City.

Effective June 28<sup>th</sup> 2007, CMA CGM will upgrade its Maya Express Service, linking Miami and Belize City as a newly added Port of Call.

We are pleased to offer our customers this new trade lane which will incorporate a weekly fixed-day service with sailings every Thursday from Miami and arriving in Belize City Monday evenings.

The first sailing from Miami will be the CMA CGM Barbados departing Miami on Thursday, June 28, 2007 with arrival in Belize City on Monday, July 02, 2007.

For more information, please contact our Agent in Belize City (shown below) who will be able to answer all your inquiry:

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# Living with Climate Change

By William Ysaguiere

The warming of Earth's surface and oceans over the past century is very well documented, and may have a profound impact on Belizean's lifestyle and economic prosperity over the next century.

Meteorologist Ramon Frutos of the National Meteorology Department detailed some of the impacts during the launch of a Climate Change Public Awareness Campaign at the Coastal Zone Management Authority & Institute on Tuesday, June 26.

World Wildlife Fund Central American representative Sylvia Marin did a presentation on the WWF Climate Change witness Project, while Dr Kenrick Leslie, executive director of the CARICOM climate change center examined the issues and how they will affect the Caribbean.

Meso-American Reef scientist Nadia Bood discussed how Belizeans might help mitigate the effects of climate



*Meteorologist Ramon Frutos explains Climate Change impacts.*

change.

Belizeans may try to adapt, but facts are stubborn things. Reef scientists are already observing coral bleaching on some of our reefs. Warmer temperatures will produce more coral bleaching, with its resultant impact on the tourism industry. With tourism as a major source of employment for young Belizeans, it will also have an economic impact. Sea level rise will result in the inundation of low lying areas and an increase in our wetlands. The reduction of land mass and the impact of climate change on farming and fisheries will also have economic impact. Will we build dikes and sea walls to protect our coastal communities, or will sea level rise force us to move inland?

Where Belizeans may have the option of moving inland, in most of the smaller Caribbean islands the situation is more grim. Rising sea levels will threaten coastal roads and villages, diminished rainfall will threaten the islands' (Please Turn To Page 13) ☞



*CCCCC executive director Dr Kenrick Leslie, describes climate change impact on the Caribbean.*

# For Sale



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# St. Martin's Credit Union doing well in Cayo



**By: Ray Auxillou**

St. Martin's Credit Union of the twin towns of Cayo West is doing well. The big news is by the end of this year their capital is expected to break the \$10 million dollar ceiling.

Some people scoff at credit unions, as they are started by small people with little money to pool their fiscal resources to lend to each other. Unlike Commercial Banks, Credit Unions do not require real estate assets, or other security for loans. All Credit Union loans are called "character loans" and approved by your peers in a Loans Committee. By character, they mean, can you prove to them, that you can SAVE a little bit each week, or month? If you can develop a saving habit, then you will also be able to pay a loan.

There are useful things about Credit Unions. Those that have a checking account facility do not charge for a checking account. Commercial banks charge to have a checking account and also load it with other miscellaneous service fees, which increase their income at your expense. Some Credit Unions only have savings accounts. All banks and credit unions make their money by lending the pooled money resources. Credit unions have a fixed loan interest rate based on 12% simple interest. Commercial banks charge more loan interest than credit unions and they make it a compound interest, which is far more expensive, as you end up paying interest on your interest. They also can calculate daily, which gets more expensive than a simple interest Credit Union loan.

St. Martin's Credit Union is a member of CUNA, the international Credit Union body. Through CUNA comes many other benefits, like specialized money insurance schemes. St. Martin's Credit Union in the twin towns of Cayo West for instance has your Loans insured up to \$40,000. If you die, your loan is paid off by life insurance. This is

an automatic feature, no extra payments on your part. My credit union in Miami has our account savings insured for a \$100,000 US through something else called the FDIC. At St. Martin Credit Union, your savings are for small people and only go up to insurance of \$8,000. That's because this credit union serves small farmers, salaried workers and agriculture and small business people. Nobody can really live independently and raise a family comfortably on the low salaries in Belize, so some business venture as a sideline, or even several business ventures are necessary for young families to get ahead and pay their bills. Borrowing for such small business ventures from your local Credit Union is the best borrowing deal around.

If you borrow money, up to \$40,000 from St. Martins for a mortgage for instance, if you die, the land and house would be paid off by this insurance up to \$40,000. The children or other heirs would receive clear title after probate of your estate. Some DFC housing scheme house and lots also have this proviso, and heirs of the deceased, got their LEASE certificates free and clear from DFC. Though will still have to pay Lands Department transfer costs.

After 70 years, all St. Martin's Credit Union customer insurances are canceled however. The Credit Union system does not insure old people's money. But if you died by accident, the beneficiary of your account would get double your savings deposited from the umbrella CUNA MUTUAL insurance scheme.

If you are old and have saved, or sold your house, business, or farm and plan to live off your interest on your savings, then the Credit Union is not for you. Dividends for St. Martin's Credit Union for instance for 2006 were only 5%. Whereas most commercial banks are paying over 8% interest on your larger savings capital. 3% or more is a lot of difference in a commercial bank Certificate of Deposit.

What the Credit Union excels at is lending money for anything you want, without security, just your reputation and character and preferably some demonstration that you are honest and always eventually pay off your loans. Your Credit Union loan is usually cheaper than a commercial bank loan as well.

In comparison, a credit card will charge you about 18% interest on your

credit card borrowing. But since it is compound interest and they have a flurry of extra fees, service charges and anything else they can think of to trick you out of your money, such as changing the end of month free usage date, to the 8<sup>th</sup>, instead of the 31st or some such trickery, your credit card loan cost usually runs between 34% and 49%. ATM cards which are touted for convenience have usage fees. The trick with bank ATM cards, is if the amount the ATM card is good for is very low, then the fee you pay to use it escalates into astronomical amounts calculated on an annual basis. If you have a \$100 limit card and pay a \$2 usage fee, you are paying 2% for a short transaction of a week or two, which on an annual basis becomes de facto 24% interest over twelve months. If you have a \$500 ATM card limit, then the same \$2 fee to use it, would cost you, if you used the whole limit at one time inside of a month, the cost would be much less. The difference is less on a \$500 bigger limit of an ATM card and the interest is lower. ATM cards are about paying to use your own money for the convenience of 24 hours service from a machine and sometimes is cheaper than buying gasoline to go to the bank on a weekday.

The best bet is to get money through a Credit Union, and out in Western Cayo, St. Martin's Credit Union is the big name in the twin towns. If you borrow big and then can budget carefully for your living costs, it is the cheapest borrowing money around. You borrow one time, then budget yourself on how you spend it. Learning to budget your living costs weekly is the name of the game to get ahead and being able to SAVE.

Commercial Banks have a deal where you get approved for a big loan for some project, and they will allow you drawing privileges. You only pay interest on what you use, when you use it. The alternative is a Credit Union loan and you budget carefully.

SAVING and BUDGETING your expenses are the name of the game if you want to wisely use Credit Union loans to put your family ahead more quickly. Never borrow more than you can pay.

Here it pays to calculate what you can pay, by budgeting 20% of your in-

come from salary, or business estimate on a weekly basis for payback. This will give you the amount you can RISK to borrow in a loan. No loan should be so big it can't be paid off in less than six months. There are always new reasons why a family needs more money and quickly. Keep your loans small and manageable, make them for short term goals, rather than gamble too big and borrow too much and you will get ahead in smaller safer increments.

The success of St. Martin's Credit Union is based on an expanding local economy based on a population growth of 6% a year. Business in Cayo West is good, though business competition keeps pace with demand and cycles of supply and demand tend to get whittled down to a smaller market share in quick order through more competitors. Tourism is recovering after a drought of five years or so and seems to be expanding as new hotels and guest houses continue to sprout up all over the place, construction in general continues to maintain a steady growth pace. There are days you cannot get building materials, the demand is so high. The national export brain drain is over. College graduates have job offers to choose from and educational policy changes are paying off. Belizeans are returning home to capitalize on the boom.

A total of 2,730 loans were approved during the past year for almost \$5 million dollars. The biggest loan portfolio were "construction" loans, at over a million dollars.

There are babies everywhere as the population expands. Vehicle repair loans because of bad roads came to \$738,800 dollars. If the government ever asphalt paves the streets and roads, this loan portfolio will shrink. This is unlikely to happen though, as the future revenues for the next 30 years or so is being spent right now by the PUP on some sort of leveraged borrowing spending policy. Membership of St. Martin's Credit Union is now 4,562 persons. Income before expenses for the past year was \$877,299 dollars. Expenses run about 2/3 of that. Salaries have been raised for staff and perks approved. St. Martin's Credit Union in the twin towns is now a dynamic institution contributing to the growth of life in Cayo West.



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# Senate Elections now, before General Elections

**By: Lucilo Teck,  
WTP Deputy National  
Coordinator**

The central role of the Elected Senate must be well defined through debates and finally resolved through a National Referendum within the following sixty days. We call on the Prime Minister, Right Honorable Said Musa, to immediately appoint SPEAR and BELPAK as the Official Organizers to develop a joint program with the media houses of the Press Radio and Television to commence public debates on the issue of an Elected Senate now.

This is to inform the Belizean people on this important issue of the Elected Senate bringing together representatives of the political sector, social movements, civil society and other national actors to inform Belizeans on the positions adopted by each party and other organizations on the issue of the Elected Senate; thus contributing to a better informed electorate to decide wisely on the up coming National Referendum. ALL organizations must be given equal opportunity to voice their positions and proposals freely.

World history has recorded great human events. One of these great events was when a dedicated group of patriotic French men stormed and caused the fall of the Bastille in France. In France the Bastille was seen as an evil and hated institution of absolute power, arrogance and oppression. The fall of the Bastille brought rejoicing, liberty, quality and freedom to the French people.

Many patriotic Belizeans are too convinced that Cabinet with absolute power, corruption and oppression is a true copy of the evil and hated French Bastille. Our devoted and committed group of patriotic Belizeans have commenced to storm and demolish this evil Bastille the seat and throne of Cabinet absolute power in Belmopan.

History has also recorded that in most countries loyal to the system in great numbers have opposed political change but have always lost popular support. Both prominent and common Belizeans have agreed that meaningful change is necessary to dismantle absolute power and made more controllable now.

They are a group of determined patriots to free both houses of our Legislature from Cabinet absolute control, they demand direct election of the next Prime Minister and a free Elected Senate before the 2008 General Elections.

We demand the demolition of the Belize Bastille (Cabinet absolute power) NOW!

WTPAlliance presents to the people: The following 4 fundamental principles of our elected Senate.

1. The elected Senate will ensure an effective people’s participation, an effective people’s representation and a more effective strong and capable leg-

islature that will oppose autocracy and corruption on any form. It will truly represent all the people.

As a new elected legislative body of the Legislature the new Senate will be empowered to propose and approve laws which shall be necessary and proper for the good of the people. The elected Senate shall have the sole power of impeachment and power to try all impeachments through its mixed new committee in place the Grand Special Senate Investigative Committee.

In our proposal for an elected Senate its component shall ensure the people’s participation and their free will always prevail to ensure transparency, better accountability and good governance. The elected Senate shall provide equal opportunities to all political parties and independents to contend for seats in the Senate. It will finalize the issue of who decides in our democracy and signal the end of political arrogance, corruption and abuse of power.

Our Senate provides for the first time the proper Grand Special Senate committee. Its members shall be comprised by one elected Senator for each successful party ovements or independents to become by right members with special powers on this Grand Senate special investigative committee. All parties are assured equal voices in this Grand Special Senate investigative committee. We introduce this new Grand Special senate investigative committee to the people.

Additionally, this elected Senate shall be constitutionally empowered to have a Grand Special Senate investigative committee. On this Special committee will sit one (1) representative for each of the political entities who succeed in the Senate elections.

The successful independents will be empowered to choose one of their numbers to sit on the Special investigative committee. This will ensure transparency and fairness in determining any investigation or influencing its outcome.

If only two parties are successful in having elected Senators, the Governor General will be empowered to appoint one independent Senator to sit on the Special Investigative Committee only to ensure there is always a quorum of three (3). Such Senator will not partake in other deliberations and decisions of the Senate. At the first sitting of the Senate this Special Investigative Committee will elect a rotating president for each investigation. Once an investigation is sanctioned by the Special Investigative committee, they will be joined by 3 appointed Senators representing the civic organizations to form a Senate tribunal for a full hearing.

POWER OF IMPEACHMENT BY THE SPECIAL INVESTIGATIVE COMMITTEE

Impeachment is a charge of serious misconduct while in public office. The

new Special investigative Committee shall be constitutionally empowered to draw charges of impeachment against any official or former official of the National Government. The Senate Tribunal will sit as a court to hear the charges.

Once an official is found guilty, the Tribunal will have the power to order the immediate removal from office of the individual who shall be banned from holding public office for life and lose all benefits accrued. If evidence is uncovered that a criminal offence has been committed, the individual will be handed over to the Supreme Court for trial, conviction and sentence.

The elected Senate will ensure the proper oversight of the executive branch of Government by consistently summoning the presence of any government minister C.E.O.S and Heads of departments to provide financial reports on public projects being undertaken under any government ministry, spot checks shall routinely be carried out to ensure the proper spending of public funds, including government contracts and all government statutory bodies.

Additionally the Senate at any time will summon and question any minister or ministers responsible for internal development policies the senate will also question any minister or ministers responsible for foreign diplomacy and external development policies.

The following are the 4 fundamental principles of our elected Senate. The elected Senate will be constitutionally

empowered to:

I. To act as a check on the Executive Powers by its very nature as a legislative body from which all power emanates and from which the Executive derives its authority. The Legislative arm of Government is the check on executive Power.

II. The Senate must be Credible. To be credible, power must be given to the Senate by the people. We therefore recommend an elected Senate which is nothing new and that for the last two decades has been firmly established in Australia and in New Zealand our sister Commonwealth Countries, under the Westminster System.

III. The Senate must be truly representative of the people. Because of the special powers to be assigned to the Senate, we feel it is important to have the Senate truly representative of all our people.

IV. The Senate must have authority. There is a clearly no point in constructing this forward-looking institution without having its authority. Therefore, in addition to the regular Legislative functioning of debate and review bills, we propose that the Senate be assigned full Legislative powers.

Composition of the Senate, 21 senators total

1. Three (3) Senators will be elected directly by each district for a total of eighteen (18) elected senators.

2. Three (3) Senators appointed to represent Civic Organizations.

(Please Turn To Page 9)

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# "Size Is Not Destiny, Regionalism Is"

**By: Dr. Indira Rampersad**

Was it sheer coincidence that an alleged plot to blow up a fuel supply to JFK airport by some geriatric Caribbean "terrorists" had dramatically unfolded before our incredulous eyes just over a week before seventeen Caribbean leaders flocked to Washington D.C. in a combusive burst of tropical exuberance to participate in the Conference on the Caribbean – a 20/20 Vision (June 19th-21st, 2007)?

Organized with near-military precision, the conference was the product of the collaborative efforts of the corpus of Caribbean Ambassadors to Washington, the Caricom Secretariat, the IDB, the World Bank, the OAS and the U.S. government. The title "20/20 Vision" was appended for two reasons: first, the organizers hoped to assess the issues of the region with the clarity of perfect vision and second, they are determined to have them resolved by the year 2020. The three-fold Expert, Diaspora and Private Sector forums collectively and critically addressed anything and everything that are of concern to the region including, trade, investment, finance, energy, education, crime, security, diaspora and deeper, thicker, faster and denser integration through the Caricom Single Market and Economy (CSME).

In the U.S., we frequently hear that all politics are domestic. The bombshell terrorist plot explodes in timely fashion to be a convenient diversion from the doldrums into which the current Bush administration has sunk itself. That same week of alleged Caribbean terrorism, the U.S. media was having a field day with the minority AG Alberto Gonzales's catastrophic dismissal of three minority judges. Then came allegations of the U.S. decision to fund Sunni insurgents in Iraq. Not surprisingly, Bush's approval rating continues to slide to an all time low. It is rather curious though, how quickly the analysts were able to prepare their media speeches on "Caribbean terrorism" and make the link to Islamic fundamentalism. The message is clear. Whether in the Middle East or in our tropical paradise in America's backyard, the issue of the day is "American Insecurity."

Seemingly oblivious to America's grand designs, our leaders and professionals from the region and the U.S. diaspora, embraced the conference with passion, zeal and true Caribbean fervor. Even with the monumental Washington obelisk towering over our heads like a giant phallus, Jamaica's Prime Minister, Portia Simpson-Miller, insisted that "Size is not Destiny, Regionalism Is". But the call for a new Shiprider agreement in the interest of regional security, this time on Caribbean terms and conditions, gave credence to the age-old adage that "it's not the size of the

ship, but the motion in the ocean that really matters."

The Titanic may have sunk, but our incessant navigation for regional security has not. So far, the Caribbean conference has received virtually no attention from the mainstream American media. Our seventeen Caribbean leaders could not compete with Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, for Georgie's and the media's attention. United in their deep and abiding commitment to eradicate those "extremists and radicals who use violence and murder as a tool to achieve objectives", the unholy alliance between Bush and Olmert is reinforced by America's unrelenting support of Israeli occupation of Palestinian land.

But it gets curiouser and curiouser. Clearly, the timing of Olmert's visit was well-calculated. The 2008 election drums are rolling in the U.S. Hilary and Obama have already raised millions for their respective Democratic campaigns. And though money has never been a major problem for the Conservatives, the enormous contributions of the powerful Jewish-American lobby to the Democratic Party is no secret. Indeed, it is larger than the financial contributions from any other ethnic Political Action Committee in the U.S. Yes, all politics are domestic.

It was clear that American insecurity rather than regional security was the issue of the day when our leaders met with Bush on Wednesday morning. Hoping to repeat at least some of the gains of Reagan's Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI), their reasonable demands for more aid, trade, preferential treatment and investment from Uncle Sam, more than likely fell on deaf ears. Bush was more preoccupied with the Caribbean's relations with Venezuelan firebrand, Hugo Chavez and Cuba's indomitable Comandante, Fidel Castro. Why? Recently, at the meeting of the Caribbean Studies Association in Bahia, Brazil (May 29th-June 2nd), I attempted to explain the "Logistics Behind the 'Illogical' U.S. Cuba Policy" in the geopolitical context of both U.S. domestic politics; "Manifest Destiny" which Justifies American expansionism; and the 1823 Monroe Doctrine – the historic mission of the U.S. to ward-off European powers and protect what it considers its sphere of influence in the region. In a post-Cold War era, it seems that America's worst fears are justified. The capitalist superpower has failed to castrate Castro for forty-six years and is now ironically forced to confront an unenviable leftist political milieu in the absence of a Soviet Union, and in its own backyard. A neo-Monroe Doctrine targeting the socialist

ideology, rather than European powers, is not only timely but an imperative for the U.S. Cuba's Fidel Castro, Venezuela's Hugo Chavez, Bolivia's Evo Morales, Brazil's Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, Argentina's Nestor Kirchner, Ecuador's Rafael Correa, Uruguay's Tabare Vasquez, Chile's Michelle Bachelet and Nicaragua's Daniel Ortega, all veer toward the left. Some such as Chavez, Kirchner, Ortega, Morales and Correa have overtly expressed anti-imperialist sentiments and resentment for the Washington Consensus. Vasquez's first announcement upon election victory in 2004 was the restoration of diplomatic ties with Cuba. Correa quipped that Chavez "calling Bush the devil, offends the devil".

Yes, all politics are domestic. Strong anti-Castro Republican representation by hardline, right-winged Cuban-Americans in South Florida has facilitated the perpetual tightening of the ridiculous embargo on Cuba, particularly in election years. They constitute the second most important campaign financiers in the U.S., superseded only by that of the Jewish-American lobby. The latest 2004 and 2006 Reports of the Commission for Assistance to a Free Cuba, detail the tenets of the draconian policies which currently govern American foreign policy to the island.

These closely mirror the Monroe Doctrine of 1823 and its later Amendment in 1904 in the form of the Roosevelt Corollary. Fortunately, the cojones of some of our regional leaders, are still intact. It is the fearless and dynamic Guyanese and Soviet-trained Bharat Jagdeo, who took the Bush by the horns in his defense of the Caribbean's relations with Chavez and Castro for which Bush expressed open concern.

"It is in our national interest to have relations with Venezuela and Cuba," he explained to the distraught Bush.

"Just as it is in your interest to have relations with un-democratic Saudi Arabia." He should have added "and socialist China" which incidentally, is the largest trading partner of the United States.

The astute Jagdeo must have long realized that despite the myriad of issues on the Caribbean agenda at the Conference, the only real concern of the U.S with regards to the region is the formidable strengthening of the leftist "Castro-led Axis in Latin America" by other Caribbean countries. After all, Jamaica's Michael Manley (1976-1980), Grenada's Maurice Bishop (1979-1983) and Jagdeo's predecessor, Cheddi Jagan (1957-1964, 1992-1998), have all flirted outrageously with socialism in the past. Jagdeo must also be acutely

aware that herein lies the Caribbean's trump card for invaluable aid, assistance and preferential treatment from the United States.

But even without an expansion of the "Castro-led Axis" into Caribbean waters, a U.S. accord with regional Governments which affords the superpower easy access to the region under the guise of "Caribbean terrorism", would fulfill both the historical objectives of "Manifest Destiny" and the Monroe Doctrine and appease the Cuban-American zealots in Miami. Yes, all politics are domestic.

Sadly, American paranoia has reached such mammoth proportions that it seems to have been transmitted even to the Caribbean Diaspora in the U.S. I was privileged to be sponsored to present a paper at the Diaspora Forum of the Caribbean Conference on "Crime as an Obstacle to Diaspora Investment." The paper necessitated a series of unstructured and semi-structured interviews with members of the Caribbean business diaspora in Miami, Ft. Lauderdale, Orlando and New York. My findings reflect a highly successful but suspicious, traumatized, disappointed, cynical and angry Caribbean-American business diaspora which has not fully assimilated into the mainstream American cultural and political milieu. At the same time, the majority are not prepared to return or invest in the region mainly because of the spiraling crime rate, inadequate returns on investment due to the currency exchange rate and lack of well-paid and professional job opportunities. Yet, paradoxically, they harbor a lingering nostalgia to return to the tropical homeland.

Undoubtedly, our leaders' three-day dedication to regional issues in Washington has heightened awareness of their commitment to improving the quality of life in the region. They assured and reassured us that this conference is not just shop talk. So, even in the absence of any real American interest in developing the region, if at least two of the proposals on the regional agenda should indeed come to fruition in the short or medium-term, we can concur unhesitatingly, that the Conference has been a resounding success. By now, Caribbean leaders should know that the onus is on them to collectively take the initiative for the region's development. For "Size is not Destiny, but Regionalism is". And as far as the United States is concerned, all politics are domestic.

*Dr. Indira Rampersad is an International Relations/Public Policy Specialist at the Department of Political Science, University of Florida. You can contact her at [indi2304@yahoo.com](mailto:indi2304@yahoo.com)*



## TOPICAL TIDBITS

### Why Musa supports Taiwan and not Mainland China

BEIJING (Reuters) - China plans to sack all officials found to have secretly "kept and supported" mistresses, in a move aimed at raising social morals, state media reported on Friday. The step hardens up previous policy. "It is a misunderstanding that officials who have mistresses would only be sacked when the situation is serious," the Beijing News quoted a Ministry of Personnel spokesman as saying.

Mistresses and "second wives" are common among government officials and businessmen in China, and Chinese media have said the financial pressures of keeping mistresses have driven some officials to seek money through bribes or abuse of power.

Corrupt officials are a major cause of public outrage in China, and the country's Communist rulers have warned that if graft is not checked it could threaten the party's grip on power.

The ministry said it had studied the issue and found it "necessary to make a clarification and emphasis" on the punishment for officials who supported mistresses. "The morality of government officials shown in their management or power operation... directly affects the moral level of the whole society," the spokesman was

quoted as saying. "Therefore, officials should set up good examples, and abide by social morality rules."

Last year, a Chinese vice admiral was jailed for life on embezzlement charges after one of his many mistresses blew the whistle on him when he refused to give in to her demand for money.

### Nothing new from PUP Convention in Corozal?

The People's United Party held its National Convention in the Mexican Border town of Corozal over the weekend to endorse party leader Said Musa and other officials. The hard liners led by Ralph Fonseca sought to further discipline former Deputy Prime Minister Briceno but failed. Briceno has a couple of other big fights on his hands as his former campaign manager and friend "Chendo" Urbina builds a grown swell in Orange Walk for the UDP. When Briceno loses his seat to "Chendo", it will be a tough fall for the former northern caucus powerhouse...not unlike the Ricalde fall from grace a few decades ago.

### The philanthropist's businesses

Lord Bowen plunked down \$19.5 MILLION USD to Wartsila of Sweden to purchase special power generating

machines that basically burn crude oil from Spanish Lookout. According to the Wartsila website, Bowen intends to sell power to BEL. Wonder if the poor people of Belize will see any benefit from that sweetheart deal with a sovereign guarantee to boot. Check it out for yourselves; go to the wartsila.com website.

Some other good news for the local lord: the US has banned cheap shrimp from parts of Asia. Bowen is big in the shrimp farming business in southern Belize so this is splendid news for his bankers. Wonder if he'll take over NOVA Industries now, at fire sale price. Maybe OPIC will cut a deal with him, or vice versa, after all.

Finally, who will Bowen bank on in the upcoming general elections? We know he owns sections of the UDP and the PUP, concurrently. But who is he banking on? Wonder if he is factoring the third party coalition sans NRP?

### Corporate Raider

Ashcroft's street captains have been offering a premium to small shareholders of the telephone company. If you had bought in a \$2/share his people are offering \$10 for shares that now have a book value of about \$6/share.

BTW, BTL still promising better Digicell countrywide coverage but it remains just that: empty promises.

### See You in Court! But When?

The Musa Administration appointed a new Court Registrar almost a year ago, but the backlog of cases seems to be getting longer. Perhaps Henry Usher would have been the better choice for Registrar after all. He wouldn't be allowing a two to three year wait for civil cases...

### OW under a black cloud

When will the Belize Sugar Industries make good on promises to reduce the amount of ash it dumps on surrounding communities? How many years will it take, and what kind of guidelines and penalties are in place for such emissions? If its causing plants to choke to death, what is it doing to the lungs of Orange Walkenos?



*An Orange Walk resident swept up this pile of fly ash from the patio, where they say the hot ashes have been killing their garden plants.*

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# No Bicameral Elected Senate? No Reform

The Honorable Said Musa has indicated a leaning toward an Elected Senate. This would be great news if Said Musa and the PUP are contemplating a Bicameral Senate with its checks and balances arising from its separation of powers and separation of chambers. As the facts are unfolding however, it appears that if there is to be any version of an Elected Senate endorsed by the PUP it will be a watered down.

A diluted version of the Senate which does not have Bicameral features would not be of any value. Instead, it would be an unpatriotic approach and an insult to the voters. The Prime Minister's actions are to be given greater consideration than his words.

A forum has been set up allegedly to determine the public's position as to an Elected Senate. But does it? The forum was not a public forum. It is a PUP forum conducted and controlled by the PUP. In its first public meeting, a PUP Senator spoke against an Elected Senate—acting as “devil's advocate.” But we have to wonder, are these forums structured in such a way to distort that which the PUP will eventually claim is the public view?

The PUP, in the last National Election, promised political reform and a halt to the ever increasing corruption. There was no reform and corruption has grown to staggering proportions, injuring the country's economy. A Bicameral Elected Senate (two legislative chambers) is the best means of stopping corruption. It would take the power from politicians interested only in lining their own pockets and finally give the power to the People where it belongs.

Evidence that points to the PUP's proclivity towards watering down proposed reforms is found in the PUP's present consideration of the important issue of Election Reform.

In 2002 the Political Reform Commission in its determination put a priority upon initiating laws regarding election finances. The Commission wanted

the laws in place prior to the 2003 election. The PUP did not consider instituting such laws.

As 2008 approaches the PUP has been considering election reform. Even now, the PUP is in the process of weakening a version of election reform bill regarding finance that was prepared for them based on Canadian laws. One would believe that Canadians laws on to election reporting would be proper for Belize. Apparently the Ministers do not think so as they are looking for something less effective. You can't blame them as the Canadian law would expose donation that the ministers do not want exposed and provide for penalties they do not want to face, for failure to report the donations. So what they will come up with and present to the people as campaign finance “reform” will not be beneficial to the people; it will be useless except are more PUP propaganda.

Those who believe an Elected Senate will slow down the legislative process are using a spurious argument. The slowing process is actually excellent, as it prevents the Prime Minister from ramming through legislation before those who are to vote on it are able to discover the bad elements hidden in the legislation.

Those who claim an Elected Senate will be more expensive are using an even weaker argument for an Elected Bicameral Senate would be the Country's greatest money saver. Its curb on corruption would save taxpayers many times the cost of running the Senate. There would be no more \$34 Million guarantees, or other guarantees of private debts for cronies.

Those who suggest that Senators should be appointed by political parties, churches or other organizations are not thinking clearly and ignoring the problems created by such appointments. Senators should not be continued as rubber stamps.

It is Belize's interests that are to be served by the Senators, not the interest of any political party, church or other organization. Senators should answer to the

people. Therefore, all Senators should be elected by the people and therefore answerable to them, directly.

An Elected Senate may not be a perfect form of government. However, an Elected Bicameral Senate has existed for hundreds of years in many countries and continues as the best form of government that has ever been devised.

Obviously the cronies and their political mentors do not want a Bicameral Elected Senate for one reason and one reason only: it would put a stop to available slush funds. There would no longer be a means whereby the political party could reward its friends and contributors with public money at public expenses.

The voter must be careful and shun political rhetoric which is not sincere and designed to mislead the public. Under the present system there is no true democracy. The ministers must answer to the Prime Minister who is in effect a dictator. If they go against the Prime Minister's wishes they are removed from their positions.

So the questions right now are: does the Honorable Said Musa and the PUP really want Senate reform, campaign financing reform and other reforms so that they become servants of the people? Or do they just say they do, so they can continue to serve themselves at the public's expense?

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Page



By: Julia Heusner

Drugs are chemicals that change the way a person's body works. Cigarettes and alcohol are two kinds of legal drugs. But smoking and excessive drinking are not healthy for adults and off limits for kids

One of the most popular drugs is marijuana because it is so easy to get and usually cheap.

But there are many other kinds of drugs, but all of them are hazardous to your body and your health.

Most people use the drugs just to forget about everything, some kids think that drinking and drug use is alright because they see their parents come home after a long day of work and all they do is reach for a beer or pop a pill.

Some people think that drinking and smoking helps reduce stress - they're wrong. They forget about the dangers drugs can cause them.

Marijuana is a big seller these days and it is a lot worse than it used to be people's bodies are building up immunity's to the drugs the dealers have to add more things to help you get the "high".

When a child's parents divorce the child feels that it's their fault and they need a way to escape from the pain of their messed up life. Another reason is because their friends pressure them into using drugs.

Most teen marijuana users are between the ages of 12-18. They often say they feel great at first and that

# Why Drugs are Bad

drugs are the best thing that ever happened to them — but that doesn't last long.

Over time, they'll need more and more to get the same high — and this really increases the risk of addiction, and in some cases, overdose. Drugs can ruin their health, force them to drop out of school, lose friends, and impair their judgment enough that they'll do some really stupid stuff.

Drug users do things they wouldn't do while sober—they engage in unsafe sex or put other people's lives at risk on the road.

Sure, this might all seem fun for them while they're doing it but are they going to be laughing through an unwanted pregnancy, a car accident, or during the wait for results from an AIDS test?

The issue of drugs can be very confusing to young children. If drugs are so dangerous, then why is the family medicine cabinet full of them?

And why do TV, movies, music and advertising often make drug and alcohol use look so cool?

**Why do people take bad or illegal drugs?**

There are lots of reasons. Maybe they don't know how dangerous they are. Or maybe they feel bad about themselves or don't know how to handle their problems. Maybe they don't have parents they can talk to.

**Why are some drugs good and some drugs bad for you?**

When you get sick, the drugs the doctor gives you will help you get better.

But if you take these drugs when you're healthy, they can make you sick.

Also, there are some drugs, like

crack, that is **never** good for you. To be safe, never ever take any



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

Opportunities to meet new friends will come through pleasure trips or social events. Be sure to take care of the needs of youngsters. You will have the discipline to make changes you feel are necessary. You will be extremely receptive to new and progressive methods at work. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

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

Avoid any erratic behavior or it could cause isolation at home. Try to join groups of interest such as ballroom dance classes or perhaps an internet organization. Get help setting up a reasonable budget. Look into ways of making extra cash. Make residential changes that will lift your spirits. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

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

Social events will be plentiful. You're not your usual self this week. You can offer your help to others but back off if they appear to be offended by your persistence. Avoid any confrontations with colleagues. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

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

Home improvement projects will enhance your residence and bring the family closer together. Responsibilities with respect to older relatives may be a burden. You might be overly emotional concerning situations at work. Be sure to look into travel opportunities that will provide you with mental stimulation. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

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

You may want to stay in the background this week. You need adventure and excitement in your life. You may feel a need to make changes to your legal documents. You need to take a long, hard look at yourself and your personal situation. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

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

Don't overspend to impress someone who interests you. Disputes on the home front may be hard to avoid. The locks, stove, gas, or electric wires may not be secure. You can come up with ways of earning extra cash. Your lucky day this

week will be Saturday.

And find other ways to cope with your problems. Taking drugs just makes things worse.

week will be Saturday.

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

Your creative input will be appreciated by your boss. You will attract new love interests. Moves will be hectic but favorable in the end. Take precautions while traveling; you don't have to get anywhere that fast. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

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

Opportunities for romance may develop through dealing with groups that have a purpose. Be cautious while traveling to foreign countries. Think twice before you say something you might regret later. Don't lend or borrow. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

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

Balance is required if you want stability. You can raise your standard of living if you pick up some freelance work on the side. You are exceptional at presenting your ideas. Take care when dealing with older relatives. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

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

Avoid any confrontations with colleagues. Extend an invitation to clients you enjoy spending time with. Do not sign contracts or get involved in any uncertain financial deals. Try to be there for someone if they need assistance. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

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

Don't expect new acquaintances to be completely honest about themselves. Don't evade important issues; you may find yourself backed into a corner. You really can't do anything to change matters this week. In return, the satisfaction you get is enough for you. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

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

Problems with large corporations or institutions are apparent. Try to get others to stand behind your good judgment. Be sure that you lay your cards on the table. You should look into making some physical changes, such as new hair color or toning up your body. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

## Senate Elections now, before General Elections

(Continued From Page 7)

### Senate Elections

1. Three (3) Senators shall be elected by each district for a five (5) years term. There shall be midterm Senate Election.

2. Nine (9) Senators shall vacate their seats at the end of the thirty (30) months expiration of the first Senate Elections.

The (9) Senators seats to be contested at the first mid term Senate Elections shall be by the alphabetical order of districts. Three (3) Senators of the Belize District, three (3) Senators of the Cayo District and three (3) Senators of the Corozal District, the Orange Walk, the Stann Creek and Toledo Districts, Senators shall seek endorsement at the end of the Senate first term.

We propose that Village Council Elections, City and Town Council elections be reduced to a thirty (30) months term and be held simultaneously with each midterm senate elections. The Senate is the people's House, it belongs to the people.

Building Democracy - The key for a better future and a better country is our goal.

Free Senate elections and a direct election of the Prime Minister **now**.

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## Recommended Reading for our Readers

### Public Servant Encourages Today's Youth

#### New Book Motivates Future Leaders to Reflect on Their Roles in the World

**ROCKVILLE, Md.** – A new book designed to inspire young people to greater heights, J. Edsel Edmunds' *The Triangle of Success* (now available through AuthorHouse), presents motivational tools and sound advice for building a foundation from which to soar.

Directed at youth, especially those in disadvantaged situations, Edmunds seeks to empower them and help them reach their full potential. In order to achieve this, he offers a "Triangle of Success" with three key facets: goal setting, believing in oneself and creating action plans. This roadmap to achievement helps readers focus on improvement in any area of their lives.

The book emphasizes an understanding of the differences in culture that often spark confrontation and confusion.

He stresses that humanity is the common thread among the people of the world. Taking time to develop a greater appreciation of viewpoints and lifestyles foreign to one's own will help open minds and strengthen people's capacity to serve.

Edmunds encourages young people to explore constantly, acquire hobbies that stimulate their creativity and brain power and realize the vast amounts of information they have yet to learn. This sets the stage for people to transform into the strong leaders the world desperately needs.

An uplifting book, *The Triangle of Success* motivates readers of all ages to assess how they can better themselves for the good of their world.

Edmunds has spent his career in public service. He earned a bachelor's degree in agronomy from the University of Puerto, a master's degree in plant pathology and a Ph.D. in nematology from

Cornell University. A former research fellow at the University of the West Indies and director of research and development with the Windward Islands Banana Growers association, he served as a senator in St. Lucia and as an ambassador of that country to the United States, United Nations and Organization of American States. He was chairman of the OAS Permanent Council and chief of OAS electoral missions in Guyana and Grenada. An international consultant to donor agencies, he has also written more than 50 papers in top-

ics ranging from agriculture to democracy. His awards include accolades from the Queen of England and a decoration in the rank of Grand Cross from Chile. He has published one other book, a poetry collection titled *Many Horizons* (Diaspora Press, Medgar Evers College, NYU).

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## New Cruise Port in Quintana Roo

Mexican communications and transport ministry SCT has awarded to businessman José Alberto García a 2.35bn-peso (US\$216mn), 20-year concession to build and operate a cruise ship terminal in southern state Quintana Roo, according to SCT documents.

No bidding process was carried out, as the concession was directly awarded to García, an SCT official told BNamericas.

The terminal, which will be known as

Punta Brava, will occupy 47,182m2 of land in the state's Benito Juárez municipality, near the Chetumal-Puerto Juárez highway, according to the SCT documents.

Works to build the port, that will include five mooring positions, will begin upon the approval of its executive project, which will be evaluated within 30 days once handed in to SCT. After that García will have two weeks to make any necessary changes, the documents read.



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# Living with Climate Change

➡ (Continued From Page 5)

potable water supply, and reduced fisheries catch will threaten the islanders' food supply. An increase in insect pests such as mosquitoes will also produce and increase in vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue.

Climate research shows that most of the warming in the past half century has resulted from manmade greenhouse gases. In recent years, global warming has been the subject of a great deal of political controversy. As scientific knowledge has grown, this debate is moving away from whether humans are causing warming and toward questions of how best to respond.

### The Planet is Heating Up and Fast

Glaciers are melting, sea levels are rising, cloud forests are drying, and wildlife is scrambling to keep pace. It's becoming clear that humans have caused most of the past century's warming by releasing heat-trapping gases as we power our modern lives. Called greenhouse gases, their levels are higher now than in the last 650,000 years.

Canada's Inuit see it in disappearing Arctic ice and permafrost. Shantytown dwellers of Latin America and Southern Asia see it in the lethal storms and floods. Europeans see it in the disappearing glaciers, forest fires and fatal heat waves. Evidence from tree rings, ancient coral and bubbles trapped in ice cores reveal that the world has not been as warm as it is now for a millennium or more. The three warmest years on record have all occurred since 1998; 19 of the warmest 20 years have all been observed since 1980. And Earth has probably never warmed as fast as in the past 30 years - a period when natural influences on global temperatures, such as solar cycles and volcanoes should have cooled us down.

Other signs that are hard to ignore: Carbon Dioxide (CO2) levels are rising. The oceans and seas are warming. The glaciers are melting. Sea level is rising. The maritime ice sheets are becoming thinner. The lakes are shrinking. The ice platforms are collapsing. Birds incubate their eggs earlier. Coral bleaching are more frequent. Invasion of exotic species has become harder to control. Amphibians are disappearing. Beach erosion is increasing.

Warming is truly global. Since 1979, when satellite measurements started, scientists have observed that the land is warming significantly faster than over the oceans, but that warming is ev-



WWF-CA rep Sylvia Marin and reef scientist Nadia Bood discussed how to mitigate the effects of climate change and global warming.

erywhere, except for parts of the eastern Pacific, Southern Ocean and parts of Antarctica.

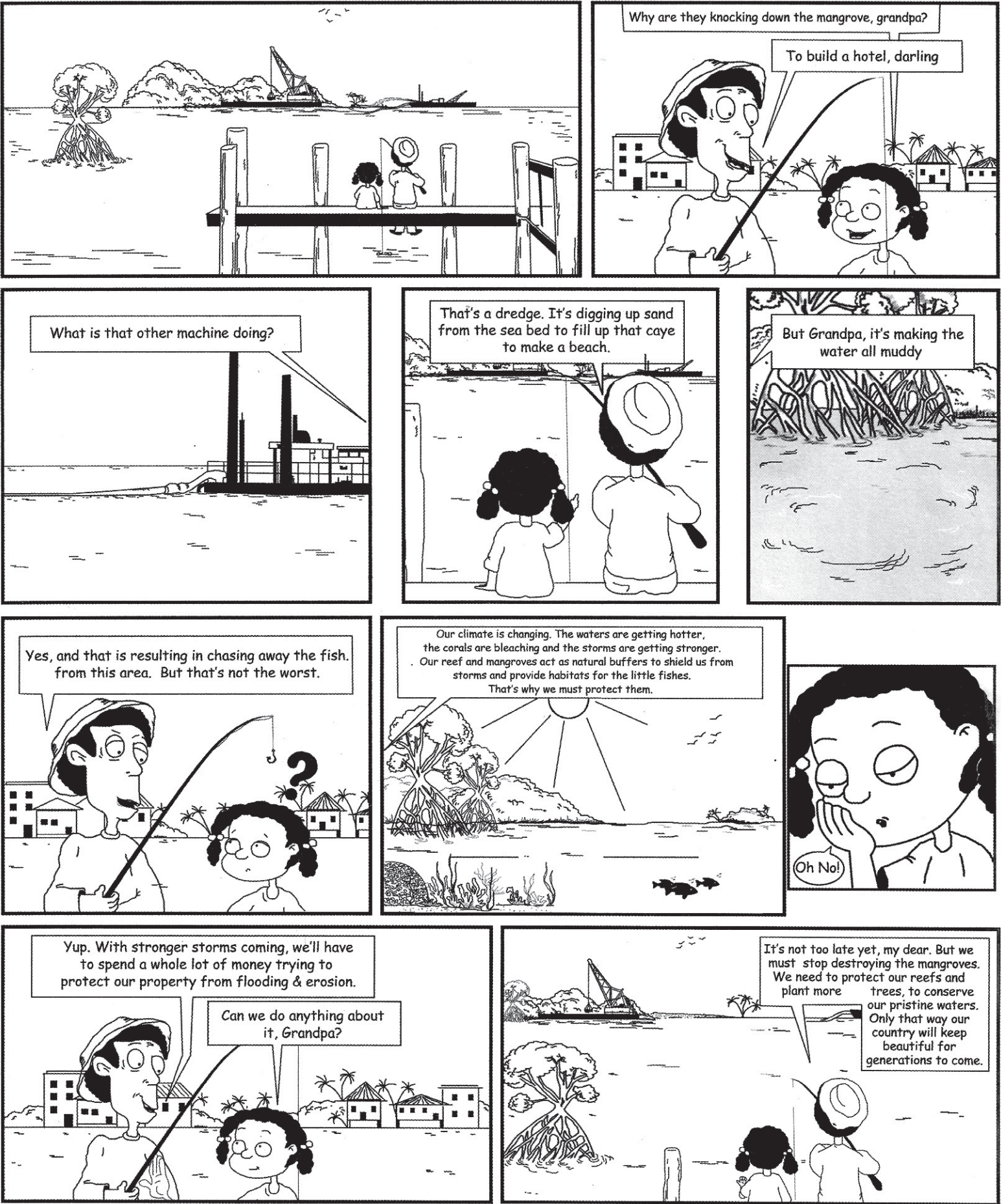
The warmth of the past 50 years is

unusual when compared to the past 1,300 years. The last time the polar regions were significantly warmer than at the present (about 125,000 years ago),

the reductions in polar ice caps led to a 4 - 6 meter rise in sea level.

With the industrial revolution of the eighteenth century came rise in carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide levels which have resulted in global warming. The International Project on Climate Change postulated in February 2007 globally average surface air is warming to around 1.8°C for the low scenario (likely range 1.1 °C to 2.9 °C) to 4.0 °C by 2099. Under one of the climate change scenarios (SRES A1B), by mid 2090, global sea level will reach 0.22-0.44 m above the 1990 levels, and rising at a rate of about 4 mm per year.

In the Caribbean, where much of our livelihood comes from the sea, a delicate balance will need to be struck between investing in tourism development and mitigating the effects of climate change on fisheries and tourist attractions such as the beaches and the reef.





# Guest Gallery



El Salvador’s Sandra Lopez wowed the judges with her physique and floor routine to win a gold medal at the Central American Bodybuilding and Body Fitness Championships at the Bliss Institute on Saturday night.



These Belize City youngsters found an innovative way to beat the heat.



Belize swept the 1.68 cm class - Josephine Gault winning bronze, Kayla Myvett - gold and Arlene Welch - silver.



Emily Rose Vernon was a star performer at her Kindergarten variety show.



“Kegin” is a 17 year old manga artist in the US with Belizean parents



Prime Minister and first lady of St Vincent, Mr. and Ralph Gonsalves, Belize’s Foreign Minister Lisa Shoman and General Manager of Independent Weekly, Trevor Vernon, at the closing reception of the Conference on the Caribbean in Washington DC June 21.



## INdependent Classifieds



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**Free Ads!** The INdependent Reformer is you your first classified ad with us free of charge! After that only \$10 per advert per issue. Ads must be: 1) 20 words or less 2) photo must

be jpeg or tiff formats only. **Must be emailed, no disk pickup or drop off**  
3) business card –first run is free 2007, \$20 a run thereafter  
4) All classified ads must be emailed to [independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com](mailto:independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com) with cc to

[kheusner@yahoo.com](mailto:kheusner@yahoo.com) and checks to PO Box 2666, Belize City. Please note:

We must receive your ad by Friday at mid-day for inclusion in following Tuesday issue.

## NOTICE

### Private Property Owners Meeting

Friday 6 July 2007

9AM @ Spanish Lookout

All owners, occupiers and people in possession of Belizean lands are invited to attend a very important meeting at Spanish Lookout on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> July to develop a Private Property Policy concerning oil exploration and production.

There are a number of issues affect private landholders for oil exploration and production which are not well defined, and thus do not allow the private landowner or occupiers to accurately access what rights and options are available in negotiating the use of their property. The issues have been presented in a discussion series which has been circulated to interested parties for the purpose of developing a consensus position on the issues for inclusion as part of a Private Property Policy. The goal of this policy is to establish a consistent position which clearly sets out the rights of landowners and occupiers, and the conditions for using their lands for oil exploration and production which is consistent with international practice. The intent is NOT to be confrontational, but instead to develop a positive and uniform platform from which fair and reasonable private land use agreements can be negotiated.

**For More Information Contact:**

[mlm@btl.net](mailto:mlm@btl.net)

[junglejim@btl.net](mailto:junglejim@btl.net)

[palmspring@btl.net](mailto:palmspring@btl.net)



## Land For Sale Suitable for Conservation



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# Crude Facts

## The Spanish Lookout Oil Field

Belize Natural Energy started oil production operations in the Spanish Lookout oil field in late 2005. Since that time, the Spanish Lookout Community has benefited significantly both economically and socially, directly and indirectly from BNE operations.



Separation unit and storage tanks at Iguana Creek



BNE conducts its operations on less than 1/4 of a percent of the total land area in Spanish Lookout

BNE manages the Spanish Lookout field with some 7 million barrels of proven reserves. The 5 wells yield a combined average of 3,200 barrels a day. During 2006, 806,264.81 barrels of crude oil were produced.

### Economic Impact

During the short time BNE has been operating in the area, the company has directly paid Spanish Lookout businesses including civil works contractors, hardware vendors, fabricators, electricity suppliers, crude oil truckers and many others more than 8.8 million dollars for goods and services.

BNE pays the owners of the land where the wells are located an annual rental fee for the land used by the company. BNE pays for the use of community roads and for damages to crops, fences etc. BNE has paid Mennonite monitors to be present while work is being carried out. Furthermore the Spanish Lookout community will also receive from the Government of Belize 5% of royalties paid by BNE.



### Social & Environmental Impact

#### TRAINING:

Spanish Lookout residents have benefited from participation in First Aid training. The company is currently planning an advanced First Aid course to be delivered by the Red Cross and an oil measurement course through Caleb Brett Intertek, a world renowned oil measurement provider. The Spanish Lookout community and Government of Belize have been invited to participate.



#### FIRE-FIGHTING:

BNE has provided fire-fighting assistance to communities in and around the Spanish Lookout area. During the last dry season, the company put out 3 fires within Spanish Lookout and two forest fires in surrounding areas. This was done using BNE's fire fighting equipment and company personnel based at Iguana Creek at no cost to area residents.



Oil storage and truck loading bay at Iguana Creek

BNE has over the short period of exploration and production operations moved to minimize its presence in the Mennonite Community respecting the community's wishes. As such a pipeline was installed that gathers all the oil produced from the field and transports it to a central facility outside of the community and there is no flaring, venting or trucking of crude oil being conducted within the community.

Flaring occurs exclusively at Iguana Creek



A small maintenance crew works in rotating shifts at the 5 well sites on a 24hr basis.

### OIL LANGUAGE 101

**PIPELINE:** a system of connected lengths of pipe, usually buried in the earth or seafloor, that is used for transporting crude oil and natural gas from a producing area to refineries or terminals. <http://www.maverickenergy.com/lexicon4.htm> | A Dictionary for the Oil & Gas Industry, PETEX

BNE's pipeline passes underground from the well sites in Spanish Lookout to the Central Gathering Facility at Iguana Creek.



PIPELINE MARKER



INSERT # 4  
June 2007