

# The Independent

Reformer  
for the People

Vol. 2 No. 5

Friday, February 2, 2007

\$1.00

## RAM PUSS TAX

### GOB's Rake n' Scrape Energy Policy

Last week the government announced it was lowering pump prices by a shilling. What they didn't tell you was they were simultaneously raising the tax you pay for that fuel.

They do it all the time. Whether acquisition prices go up, or down, worldwide. Jump high, jump low they pump us some more. We see on international news where oil has gone from \$70 to \$50 a barrel over the past few months. Have you seen a major drop in your expenditure at the gas station? I didn't think so. Please don't force me tell the pol-lies where to put that shilling...

Belize has what is the clearly the undisputed highest rate of energy taxes in the entire western hemisphere. And we are supposedly an oil producing and self sufficient power generation country. But, where are the revenues from that oil we export? Government has not collected a penny from the exporters who extract our hydrocarbons; yet, we tax imported hydrocarbons in excess of 250% up front. They are supposed to tax the extractors at 40% of a very flexible net revenue rate while imports are taxed on their CIF gross value. Yet instead they take 250% off the



drocarbons in excess of 250% up front. They are supposed to tax the extractors at 40% of a very flexible net revenue rate while imports are taxed on their CIF gross value. Yet instead they take 250% off the

Belizean consumer!

There is layer upon layer of taxes, fees, and commissions on imported fuels: RRD, import duty, environmental tax, distribution tax, safety fees, storage fees, and about three layers of government price-controlled commissions based on a less than transparent formula. The formula is adjusted every time a new shipment comes in too with a new law called a statutory instrument or SI that no one ever gets to see. We tried repeatedly.

Belize imports approximately 11 million gallons of regular gasoline a year and is currently paying the importer \$3.62 BZ dollars a gallon (or US \$1.81 a gallon). Bizarrely, prices at the pump after the various layers of taxes is a whopping BZ\$9.33 a gallon (or is US \$4.665)! That's almost three times the acquisition cost in de facto consumption taxes. Why?

The rich people of Belize have all sorts of avenues to avoid the excessive fuel taxes: free zones qualification (the green placas on their SUV's), honorary consuls (red

placas), non-resident Belize ambassadors to far away places, statutory boards (yellow placas, including Lucas' port-o-let), special epz's to the favorite few, and development concessions to the other folks including the airport. No, the treasury-raiders pay no taxes on fuels, no import duty, no taxes on their containers—in some cases no taxes period. These predators get government to pay and protect them at the same time, in return they find ways to channel resources to the ministers' private collection agencies.

Despite their sins, they and their collaborators remain in a state of grace, if the long lines receiving communion at Mass are any indication. They also have the audacity to announce 'poverty alleviation strategies' while pumping the poor and middle class for all they are worth when they try to fill their car, boat or ride the bus or take a taxi.

Yes, GOB, in case you have not noticed, the beggars on the street you just deigned to give wa li shilling to, are taxi drivers, fisher folk, bus riders, the small family businesses, (Please Turn To Page 16) ■

## Belize Oil - Boon or Bane

by Des Parrett

Following some excitement over a previous article on oil in Belize, (Friday January 19<sup>th</sup> edition) INdependent Reformer Weekly spoke with Spanish Lookout oil consultant Jim Cavanaugh.

We met at his home and noted he has four computers on desks around the room and charts, degrees, certificates and documents on the walls, and in neat piles on chairs and filing cabinets. He obviously lives with his work.

**IW.** How was it possible for a small company like Belize Natural Energy to discover oil in Belize?

**JC.** "Let's get the perceptions correct. BNE did NOT discover oil in Belize. They discovered a new field at Spanish Lookout. We have known for many years that there was oil here in Belize."

**IW.** But I understood that there were 50 dry holes before the BNE discovery.

**JC.** "That is not true. They were

*NOT all "dry" holes; some did indeed have oil, but could not be produced profitably. A number of wells were drilled near Belmopan years ago that found oil. With low oil prices, and no oil infrastructure, it was not economical to produce them, so they were shut in, but they are still there and so is the oil. These wells clearly established that we had oil in Belize."*

**IW.** Isn't it unusual though for a small oil company like BNE to drill in a remote place like Belize?

**JC.** "More than unusual. It was due to the excellent geology studies of Susan Morrice plus tremendous courage on the part of the company investors to tackle such a high risk wildcat. Many of us petroleum geologists were taking "vacations" to Belize checking oil prospects right after the OPEC oil embargo in 1972-73 when oil shot up to \$40 a barrel. I came here with ARCO and there were also geologists from Marathon, Gulf,

*Phillips, Anschutz and others checking out the oil potential. We had our chance but our companies did not have the courage or conviction to drill. In their defense, though, the economics were pretty borderline as the price of oil dropped steadily to under \$10. The key factor is that major oil companies lost interest while Susan Morrice didn't."*

**IW.** How did BNE know where the oil was?

**JC.** "They didn't. There is no technology that tells us WHERE the oil is, only where it might be. BNE used seismic studies to identify structures in the subsurface that could possibly store oil if it were present. They drilled on one of these structures and the result was a Cinderella story of success. It wasn't due to a Fairy Godmother though, it was due to good geology coupled with intelligent use of complex petroleum technology. (Please Turn To Page 13) ■

### Inside this Issue

**How Stupid Can We Be? PART II**  
pg. 3

**Dis Da Fu We...  
Addiction**  
pg. 4

**Slash and Burn**  
pg. 5

**World of Riches**  
pg. 7

# Letter to the Editor

## Editorial Director

*Meb Cutlack*

## Editor

*Karla Heusner Vernon*

## General Manager

*Trevor Vernon*

## Design/Layout

*William G. Ysaguirre*

## Published by:

*Independent Publishing*

*P.O. Box 2666*

## Telephones:

*(501) 225-3520*

*Company Ltd.*

*Email:*

*Belize C.A.*

*independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com*

## Printed by:

*National Printers*

*New Road*

*Belize City, Belize*

For an online version of the

INdependent Reformer

visit us at

[http://www.belizenorth.com/  
independentreformer.htm](http://www.belizenorth.com/independentreformer.htm)

OR

[http://belizenews.com/  
independentonline.pdf](http://belizenews.com/independentonline.pdf)

## At the Crossroads!

Dear Editor,

The signed May 31<sup>st</sup> 2006 Investment Agreement selling 46.59% of the Grower's wholly owned assets in CPBL (Citrus Products of Belize Ltd.) to a Strategic Investor BWPL (Blue Waters) is at the heart of a controversy. This issue has to come to a head.

The Committee of Management of the Citrus Growers Association (CGA) are the architects of this crisis themselves: rather than convene a Special General meeting to inform citrus growers as to the details of the Investment Agreement signed, the CGA Committee of Management chose instead to use such an occasion to oust a sitting Director, Denzil Jenkins.

Grower's instructions for the Committee of Five to oversee the process of incorporating recommendations into a supplementary agreement were ignored.

These epic failures in procedure are among others and could rightly be described as corporate arrogance in this whole affair. However, the CGA Committee was duly authorized to act by its membership. To second guess this instruction is now secondary to this fact. Notwithstanding, these actions have eroded CGA's moral authority to govern.

The industry is at a crossroads! It requires logical and rational reasoning to determine how best to proceed from this juncture.

To pursue an agenda at this stage seeking "to set aside" the May 31<sup>st</sup> 2006 Investment Agreement will, in my opinion, move the citrus industry from confusion to chaos. I will not participate in this. I stand by the recommendations of the Committee of Five and

believe all recommendations should be executed in its purest form by a newly elected Committee of Management. The signed supplementary needs to be verified; CPBL must submit its value added plan and the principle of 51% control must be firmly established.

The fact is that some members of the Committee of Management participated in procedural wrongdoing. These persons are Messers. Raymond, Bowman, Scott, Polack, Donnard and Willacy. Others are accused of pursuing a hidden agenda; Denzil suggested at the last AGM that growers would be better off selling 100% of CPBL for \$20 million dollars so why the issue now of 51% for \$25 million. In order to clear the air of all these perceptions, all Directors of CGA Committee should agree to compromise and resign and seek to renew the trust and credibility of the growers. Let the industry find a way to wash itself with the transparency of a fresh mandate to govern and deal with the issues; real or perceived.

We must encourage our strategic investors to continue to act in good faith and harmonize this partnership. They have, after all, agreed to amend a signed document. CGA must demonstrate and educate the membership to the economic benefits of this arrangement.

The citrus industry needs to be able to take full advantage of current high world market prices, benefit growers and garner desperate foreign exchange for our country. It cannot do so in a hostile and heightened environment of uncertainty that could damage our markets.

The current Committee of Management has the responsibility to exhaust the process of dialogue and manage the situation. It is unreasonable and not rational to attempt to convene a Special

General meeting and an Annual General meeting on the same day. This is without precedent and can only be considered frivolous and not in the best interest of seeking a solution to ending the controversy.

The Machiavellian theory speaks to the importance of the end game. At this juncture, we must choose to put the best interest of our citrus industry first and foremost. To do otherwise is to put it on a course whereby this 93 year old industry as we know it to exist today, will self-destruct. Perhaps it is time for those of us in the old guard to step back, and allow some of the bright, fresh minds clearly evident within the rank and file of CGA's membership, to step up and be allowed to make their contribution.

This process must be guided by fruits of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5-22) and to not rely on the shallowness of our wisdom as the flesh is too anxious to practice strife, jealousy, and outburst of anger, disputes, dissensions, envy, factions and discord.


I appeal to the Committee of Management to work with the petitioners of the Special AGM and agree on the occasion of our Annual General meeting and not confuse the two.

Sincerely,

Anthony Chanona JP  
Citrus Grower

## Conflict of interest at the Bar

Dear Editor,

I find it laughable that the Bar Association was recently used as a good example of a self-policing regime. I have personal knowledge of one instance where a MAJOR Belize City law firm was representing an individual facing (Please Turn To Page 15) 

# The INdependent Reformer

*independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com*

P.O. Box 2666  
Belize City, Belize

**YES!**

Send me 6 months of the INdependent Reformer for as little as  
BZ\$30.00 (US\$30.00 international)

Name (please print)

Address Apt.

City State Zip

Email Address

Payment Included

Bill me later

Prices for subscription and postage may vary for subscription outside Belize.



# How Stupid Can We Be?

## PART II

(Continued from last week)

By Cornelius Dueck,  
Chairman,  
National Reform Party

The UDP and the PUP are no different from each other, except that one is in power, raking it in; and the other one is expecting to get in power to rake it in. Neither one have proved to be good to us, to their native country.

The following explanation is a verifiable truth, down to the penny. It is an example of how bad this deal is, and how secretive they both (the PUP and the UDP) have kept it from all of us. But no longer, the NRP is hereby disclosing the real deal:

This loan is being sold to us as a new loan to pay back some of the old money. There is no room to use any of this money to invest anywhere for the Benefit of Belize. We are at the end of our rope!

The US\$565 Million is to be used only to pay off interest owed for just part of the previous loans, and to buy back principal of US\$516 Million for some of the previous low-interest loans. Basically refinancing less than one half of our total debt, but sinking all of us into a debt for the tune of US \$ 1.305 BILLION.

The fact is that Musa is buying back less than half our debt for almost three times as much. Of course, the payments for the first few years will be very affordable, but he is throwing us from poverty to perpetual misery, and the UDP is perfectly fine with it!

Clearly, you can see that Musa is borrowing, on our behalf, a lot of money, at much higher interest rates, to pay off lower interest loans. This will soon bring about a "state of public emergency" blatantly violating the "protection of the fundamental rights and freedoms" as set forth in our Constitution... And the UDP is perfectly fine with it!

On the surface, it appears that the interest rates for this new loan are advantageous to Belize, but not so!

While during the first ten years we have to pay just interest, we will pay at least US\$ 488 Million in interest alone and we will still owe the entire US\$565 Million.

As you can read in the chart (available at [www.nationalreformparty.com](http://www.nationalreformparty.com)) the first interest payment will be due on the 20th of August of this year and it will be only for US \$ 12 Million. We need to make a payment every six months. Then, on February 20, 2009, the interest payment goes up to US \$ 16 Million every six months, and up again on February 20, 2012 to US \$ 24 Million, until August 20, 2019. So far, we would have paid the US \$ 488 Million, and we still owe the entirety of

the US \$565 Million. If you follow the chart, you will realize that on August 20, 2019, the payment jumps up to US \$52.2 Million, and goes down to the end of the loan for a final payment of US\$ 29.5 Million.

We would have paid US \$ 740.15 Million in interest. When you add the interest and principal payments for this loan, it amounts to a total of US \$1,305,150,000; this is well over US\$ 1.3 BILLION... and the UDP is perfectly fine with it!

Any way you look at it, we will be paying more than BZ \$ 2.6 BILLION

**“Any way you look at it, we will be paying more than BZ \$ 2.6 BILLION for this new loan that will not provide us with any benefit or relief whatsoever.”**

for this new loan that will not provide us with any benefit or relief whatsoever. Musa pretends us to pay back his betrayal to the country by taking out of our pockets Bz \$ 52 per month per every man, woman and child, from now until February 20, 2029. If you have a family of 5, your load will be about Bz \$ 518 per month! This is the madness of Musa and his team... They left corruption far behind, they are now in to the level of high treason... And the UDP is perfectly fine with it!

We have witnessed many times in the previous administrations, whether UDP or PUP, that they soon become employees for foreign interests, they turn into exclusive agents for the bankers and their friends to rape Belize. Both, the PUP and the UDP have offered nothing tangible to rescue the country from our increasing poverty, deep ignorance, lethargic attitude, and worst of all, they have neglected to respect us as individuals as well as the people for whom they work.

As corruption requires a lengthy in-

vestigative process, Musa and his team shall be held accountable for all their criminal negligence toward our country and charged with treason, not corruption.

Currently the Belizean Bonds are traded at around 50 cents on the dollar, that is at about half their original price, but Musa wants to buy them back paying more than twice their market price. On the Bond Exchange chart, you can read the details of the bonds that Musa intends to purchase back at their full price. Adding insult to injury, Musa and his "friends" are giving our money away,

as cash incentives, to lure the brokers, advisor, and consultants to take the deal as if this deal would be detrimental to them. The net increase in our current debt is US \$ 35.9 Million, and while Musa tries to sell us big savings, he is giving away US \$ 50.7 Million in cash incentives and commissions. This is unacceptable! ... And the UDP is perfectly fine with it!

Musa could care less, he will be out to pasture in 2008, leaving Belize in the dark ages, poorer than before, without hope or a chance to recover, ill and sick, ignorant and surrendered to his greed, plainly said: in deep misery. This will be his legacy and that of his team... and all the people working for him will be left with a dirty and turbid conscience for generations to come.

Musa, as Prime Minister and as an individual, and his friends in power, along with the foreign bankers and creditors not only continuously insult our intelligence but have placed Belize, and its noble people, at the top of the list of the stupidest people in the world. Musa

has taken us back to slavery, but of the modern kind, slaves to the creditors... and the UDP is perfectly fine with it!

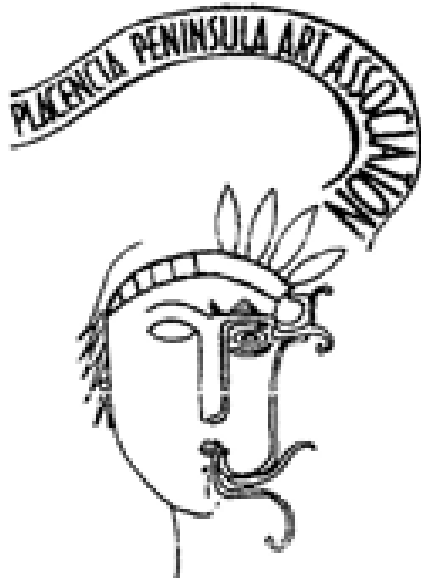
The entire parliament and the media in Belize, and those who have written many times about this issue, have based their facts only on bits and pieces of confusing information released by the GOB. The GOB would never release the level of information the NRP is releasing, because anyone with a simple calculator would discover how bad of a deal this one is. The UDP has neither the brains nor the will to understand or to analyze this deal as we have done, much less to care about it.

For the first time, the parliament, the Belizean people, as well as all the media in Belize, can read the actual facts, figures, and the terms and conditions of the US \$ 565 Million bond issue. With great pride we, the NRP, bring this to you, for the benefit of us all. Dubious and shady business-dealings by our Government has to stop. We must, together, make it stop and reverse the direction in which Musa and his cronies, and the UDP have lead Belize in the past eight years!

I am basing this writing on facts and figures never before available to anyone in Belize, to individuals or even to our Parliament. These figures are only disclosed by Musa's bankers to their investors and bondholders, to benefit them in detriment of Belize... And the UDP is perfectly fine with it!

The entirety of the bond issue in the official Offering Memorandum can be read or downloaded from our official information web site at [www.nationalreformparty.com](http://www.nationalreformparty.com).

The NRP is committed to fully disclose any and all transactions during its administration. The insults have got to stop. The Belizean people shall be treated with respect, and from now on, we need to hold the administrations accountable for everything they do.



## PPAA Presents

FEBRUARY 10 & 11, 2007

ALONG THE SIDEWALK IN  
PLACENCIA VILLAGE

ALL ARTISTS WELCOME.  
TO REGISTER:

PHONE 523-3284 OR 523-3137  
[PLACENCIAARTS@HOTMAIL.COM](mailto:PLACENCIAARTS@HOTMAIL.COM)

## 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Sidewalk Arts Festival



# Dis Da Fu We - addiction

**By: Karla Heusner Vernon**

My windshield wipers are working overtime in the pouring rain and the defroster is on high. I glance at the clock on the dashboard: 10:30 pm. Defying all reason, I have left the comfort of my warm, dry home to drive ten miles of the darkest, most treacherous strip of road in all of Belize.

I know the possibility of death is real: I have passed more than one potential murderer already. They drive, not with due care and attention to your headlights, but veer unexpectedly, even aggressively, into your lane in a futile attempt to avoid portions of the highway which has broken off and floated downstream or mysteriously sunk from view taking—it is rumored—a number of compact cars and motor scooters with it.

I know the odds of damage to life and rim are high, as high as the crackheads who will greet me at my destination... yet I press on..

I have to. I have to get my fix.

Good, they are still open. I pull up to the curb and approach the window. The proprietor peers out suspiciously through the bars. I put my money on the counter and lean forward so only she can hear, "Five dollar chicken, breast. Catsup on the side."

She looks at me, the slightest hint of sorrow in her eyes. I can see her own

can't see it. The whole family is slim and healthy looking. They're probably drinking anti-oxidant green tea to spite me.

I order a soft drink, the non-diet kind, just to be defiant.

I get back in the car and head up the road, tugging at the plastic bag with one hand to try and free the food. The heat

asleep and never know, or even suspect, what I had done.

Damn, I hope there are some baby wipes in the glove compartment; the grease on my hands might affect my control of the car. Images of the accident scene flash before me, the news report: "An open container of chicken was found in the front seat, the food apparently scattered on impact."

Reaching down with one hand, I rip off a piece of breast meat and raise it to my mouth. The crispy skin crunches almost audibly. Gosh I love skin. I know I am not alone. A man ahead of me in line once ordered "Five dolla skin! Lotta peppa!"

At least I have not reached that point of no return. When not even the chicken turns you on, just the outer covering.

Don't get me wrong, like so many Belizeans, perhaps even some of you reading this, I have tried to quit. Go cold turkey. Or even eat turkey instead of chicken. Make a healthy choice by or-

(Please Turn To Page 13) 

**"I know the odds of damage to life and rim are high, as high as the crackheads who will greet me at my destination...yet I press on.."**

family at a table in the background. They wield their chopsticks with dexterity, quickly and efficiently picking up morsels of steamed rice and a green stringy vegetable of some sort. If there is meat or chicken or fish on the table, I

of the contents radiates from the styrofoam container onto my lap.

I fumble in the dark, trying to get at the food without getting catsup on my clothing— give myself away when I get home. With luck, the family will be



"Minista! Wid village council elections deh come, dey piple out ya dun deh beg fi dey blu note already, sa"  
 "Ah like dem beggin, but let's call them mendicants, not beggars!"



# Get ready to Slash & Burn"

By: Trevor Vernon



I am motivated to write in support of "Belize's Family Farms" but want to make it painfully clear that, in this globalized world, I do

not wish to advocate for the death of the ADMs of the world...the "supermarkets of the world" among us. There is a need for both "family farming" and mechanized farming. It is government's role to strike that not-so-delicate balance and our role, as citizens, to become advocates of it.

I learned a little about "slash & burn" farming, as it were, from British textbooks at St Mary's Primary in Belize City. Only, the clear inference was that this practice was less than noble. For the longest time I couldn't bridge the gap and identify with this traditional practice. You see, farming hasn't been part of my consciousness other than being raised the son of a gentleman farmer. Farming is not fun but it brings great pleasure to watch a piece of raw bush being turned into a beautiful cash generation or food-for-the-table machine, I hear....

So what I have to say will focus less on technical correctness and more along the lines of much needed long term-survivability plans of a loose grouping of people as opposed to a specific cultural heritage grouping. For the purpose of this writing, all forms of non-mechanized, non-chemical traditional farming will be labeled: slash & burn (since there is more to slash & burn than Milpa alone).

I just happen to be more familiar with the "plantaish-style" slash & burn of the Belize River Valley experience. The Garinagu have a word they use for the farm, too: arab. But it's the same basic self sufficient farming practice that doesn't use heavy equipment or too much chemicals or genetic modification of the product. Slightly different fruits and veg production but same basic self sufficiency concept. Since, the time may well come when all Belizean families will need to develop our own productive gardens, I cannot in good conscience condone the "demonification" of this way of life. Hell, I just had a piglet "smoked" for the holiday and it doesn't get any better than that.

Self sufficiency farming not only held rural families together across this land, it ensured that the cultures

were strengthened in contributing to the search for a common identity of Belizeans, wherever they may have roamed to, or from.

So I say a little "slash and burn" in whatever language isn't all bad if it:

**So, there ought to be a place in this new Belize for the "slash & burn".**

- 1) strengthens the family unit in rural areas
- 2) eases the pressure on urban migration
- 3) strengthens and seeks to preserve the cultures: Maya, Maya Mopan, Yucateca Maya, Garifuna, Kriol, others
- 4) gets us away from the Great Said Tax (GST)
- 5) provides for a healthier lifestyle
- 6) gets us away from the excessive world of imported processed foods

But how do you compete with the powerful images of the flashy and cushy lifestyles our people see on television? How do you tell a young (wo)man from any rural area that the imported processed products they see on TV are inferior to our home grown products? They want the good life they see on TV too, at any costs, and Milpas not cutting it. Every young teen wants to smell

like Calvin Klein, not like burnt cow-horn...if you can relate.

To be forced on a farm with bearing fruits is to be fed to the biting and blood sucking insects. Not everyone's cup of tea. Traditional farming is hard and oftentimes

thankless, fruitless work... especially since the crack cocaine scourge descended on Belize and refuse to leave us alone. I hear this regularly from a "conocido" in Xaibe. That crack scourge has apparently been a key factor in destroying the Milpa way of life. He also blames Mexican Novelas and access to regular television viewing in general too. But most of all, he blames the environmentalists, the "greenies" as he calls them with scorn, the most... I don't think it's justified.

Today we can't get our people to do any kind of self sufficient farming and that ought to be a great challenge to our leaders. All our leaders: political, spiritual, and business leaders. And let's not forget the media. Thank God they don't play that "Ganja Farmer" song as much on the radio anymore, because the youths do need to learn a little roots tradition, and learn some

survivalist skills in the slash & burn.

The Agricultural Show in Belmopan is only once a year, and the promotion of subsistence farming underemphasized totally. We only seem to have the shows because we are accustomed to having them; but, lamentably it has surely lost its soul. And, yes, I am aware there are other agricultural shows in different parts but they are not national and not focused on promoting farming traditions.

Yes, we cannot rely on "slash & burn" family plots to provide us with any trading advantage on any commercial stage, at the macro level; but we sure can encourage it to strive for the six point objective laid out above.

One of my favorite restaurants in Washington, DC that served Presidents and Princesses and Prime Ministers, boasted of having their "garden" on top of the restaurant from where some of their veggies came. They didn't have to slash and burn but they had their own self sufficient garden, in the middle of that concrete jungle.

That's why I loved the place: sophisticated but with a touch of down home family value reality. I took many important people there to eat and to this day, they don't know why. They think it was for the books and the beautiful people. Little do they know.

So, there ought to be a place in this new Belize for the "slash & burn". What are our leaders afraid of: a national revolt? We know Panama's Noreiga made the "Collins" (machete) unpopular but with the right images we can turn that around.

## 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.**



# Shrimp questions begging answers

By Mary Toy

In response to Minister Godfrey Smith's column, "Flashpoint" in the Belize Times two weeks ago on Belize's shrimp industry, I don't know how anyone can make an intelligent and informed decision about the benefits and advisability of subsidizing aquaculture without the following information:

## 1. Employment at shrimp farms and other aquaculture operations.

- How many employees make minimum wage (or under minimum wage)?
- How many employees are technical staff and how many of the technical staff are Belizeans?
- How many employees are seasonal and/or part time?
- How many employees are professionals, and how many are Belizeans?
- What are the wage scales for each category of employee and how many employees are in each wage scale division?

What is the average wage of the lowest tier and seasonal employees?

f. How many of the minimum wage and seasonal employees receive any employee benefits?

g. How many days per year on the average does a seasonal worker work on shrimp farms, other types of aquaculture operations, shrimp processing facilities and shrimp hatcheries? What do they do the rest of the time?

h. How many of the minimum wage and seasonal employees are women? How many women are technical and professional staff?

i. How many employees are under the age of 16?

j. How many employees who work at shrimp farms, hatcheries, processing plants and other aquaculture operations



Farmed shrimp for processing

are Belize citizens and how many are illegal immigrants?

## 2. Aquaculture training and educational programs.

- What kind of educational programs are available for in-house training for technical and professional positions?
- Do the shrimp farms/aquaculture facilities have programs to send Belizeans for training outside the country?
- How many Belizeans have been trained and promoted as the result of any such programs?

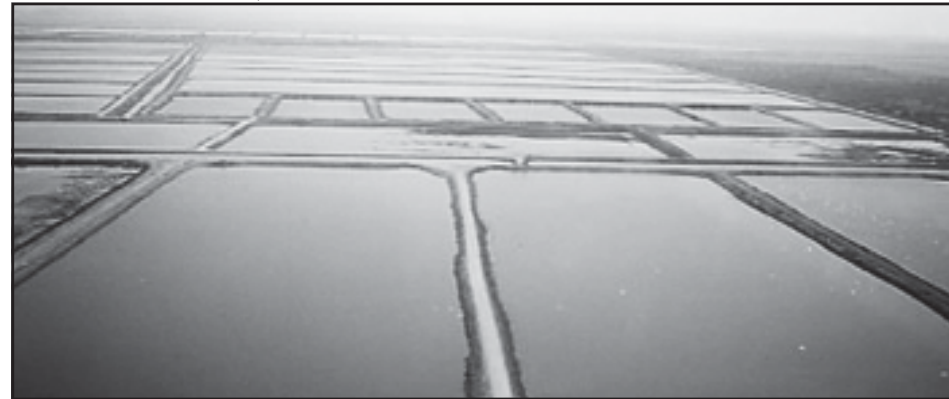
## 3. Environmental aspects of shrimp farming and other aquaculture enterprises.

a. What kind of testing is done to determine effects on local ecosystems (such as the Placencia Lagoon)?

b. Who does the testing, how often is it done, and where are the test results available?

c. Have the effluent regulations for the aquaculture industry been changed so that an adjustment is made for the small amount of effluent in a gallon of water when multiplied by millions of gallons of water that is channeled back into local rivers, streams and lagoons? (This was always one of the problems with water testing regulations in Belize with respect to the aquaculture industry. The amount

of effluent from a farm is low in small quantities of water, but the amount of effluent dumped into local waterways can be very high because of the massive amounts of water that contain the effluent.)



Shrimp farms use a lot of water and effluents into a watershed can be a problem.

d. Has the shrimp farm industry contributed anything to environmental programs in areas in which the shrimp farms/aquaculture facilities are located?

e. What happens to the waste from the shrimp processing plants?

f. What measures are in place to clean up bodies of water that have been adversely affected by shrimp farm/aquaculture effluent? Are shrimp farms/other aquaculture facilities required to contribute to any fund so that money is available for clean-ups? If so, how much is in this fund? If not, where does this money come from?

g. What is the effect of self-regulation on Belize's certification of shrimp by the European Union?

## 4. Aquaculture's effects on local/national economies.

a. What effect do shrimp farms have on the economies in the areas in which they are located? We know that they pay no taxes to local taxing authorities, so what do they contribute to the local economies?

b. What is the cost to the local and national government to provide services to aquaculture facilities and their employees - such as medical care, housing, schools, police, fire protection, road maintenance, etc.?

## 5. Shrimp farm and aquaculture enterprise ownership.

How many cabinet ministers, senators and area representatives have a financial interest in shrimp farms and other aquaculture enterprises? How much? (And don't say that's none of our business. This is the type of information they're already supposed to be disclosing under existing law.)

## 6. Aquaculture economics.

a. How much of a subsidy will it take to make Belize competitive in a world market?

b. How much of a return will the government get back for any subsidies or tax holidays granted to the aquaculture industry?

c. How long will these subsidies or tax holidays be sufficient to remain competitive?

d. What are the alternatives, e.g., are there other industries that have less of an environmental impact and a greater return on investment that would be a better investment?

## The Greater Caribbean this Week: New UN Resolution on the Caribbean Sea

Caribbean Netnews.com  
by Watson R. Denis, Ph.D

On December 20, 2006, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution entitled: "Towards the Sustainable Development of the Caribbean Sea for present and future generations" (A/C.2/61/L.30). This resolution differs from previous resolutions (54/225, 55/203, 57/261 and 59/230) adopted by the UN in that its declared objectives are unequivocal. Upon careful examination, the resolution is an achievement in light of efforts made almost a decade ago by organisations in the region including CARICOM and the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) to secure the recognition of the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development by the inter-

national community. It is timely to highlight the main points presented in this new resolution.

First of all, in its preamble and introduction, the resolution refers to the international instruments (reports, conferences and declarations) regarding environmental issues as well as conventions on the protection and enhancement of the marine environment of the Caribbean region and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Indeed, it makes reference to the major issues regarding sustainable development discussed by the international community in recent years.


Moreover, among the natural phenomena that compelled the members of the UN to adopt this resolution, they cite the fragility of the ecosystem of the Caribbean space and the economic vulnerabil-

ity of the region. The resolution thus underscores the importance of climate changes and variations, the intensity of natural disasters, primarily drought, hurricanes and volcanic eruptions.

And among the human phenomena, they make mention of the intensive use of the Sea for transportation, as well as marine pollution, both land-based and from vessels, which, out at sea, sometimes release waste and wastewater, not forgetting the accidental discharge of dangerous and toxic substances.

The adoption of the resolution is also based on efforts undertaken by the States and countries of the region to preserve the coastal and marine resources of which they are guardians and their expressed will to improve

the management of the Sea in the context of sustainable development. In this regard, the resolution salutes the work and initiatives undertaken by the ACS, including the establishment of the Caribbean Sea Commission and the adoption of a definition of the concept of the Caribbean Sea as a special zone, which were hitherto lacking.

In view of the foregoing, the resolution highlights a number of reasons why the Caribbean Sea deserves to be protected and preserved for present and future generations. In this regard, environmental motives are added to the social and economic realities. Mention is made of its exceptional biodiversity and very fragile ecosystem. This is coupled with the fact that it is a source of eco (Please Turn To Page 7) 



# A World of Riches awaits Belize

## By Meb Cutlack

The ups and downs of cruise ship tourism will, no doubt, be with us for decades to come. The one sure thing is that, while putting direct cash every week into the government's bottomless pockets, the business does little financial or philosophical good to the majority of Belizeans and is both intrusive of the life and living of Belizeans.

Ecotourism, and the sustainable use of our natural resources, however, is a way in which Belizeans can be enriched today and tomorrow and the secrets of their well-being safeguarded far into the future.

Natural healing is a huge and lucrative market which is a part of this vision. Nurtured, it can enrich all the districts of Belize, as well as the citizens of Belize City.

Throughout Belize today there are many natural healers. Their work and talent, practicality and usefulness are an accepted way of healthy living among a great many Belizeans.

They practice their art with an easy and deceptive familiarity but, it comes from lifetimes of wisdom gathered through personal experience, passed down through generation via demonstration and oral tradition and integrated as part of the daily lives of many

villagers and townspeople.

There are no short cuts to the amount of time it takes to gain this wisdom but the wisdom is there. It is a treasure within our boundaries which can be accessed without harm to either time honoured tradition or the effectiveness of the remedies themselves.

Not only have healers in Belize cured cancer, but also AIDS and Rheumatic

**Natural healing is a huge and lucrative market... Nurtured, it can enrich all the districts of Belize**

Fever. Below is a list of many other illnesses which healers claim are treated successfully, naturally.

Asthma, Blood Poisoning, Bronchitis, Cholera, Colds, Colic in Children, Constipation, Chronic Cough with Phlegm, Whooping Cough, Dementia, Diarrhea, Earache, Eczema, Fever, Influenza, Gout, Headache, Indigestion, Insomnia, Menstrual Irregularities, Nervousness, Night Sweats, Enlarged Prostate, Ulcers, and hundreds more conditions.

Among the many practitioners of natural healing in the Cayo region there is a body which already specializes in

spreading natural healing as an ecotourism attraction. It is the Cornerstone Foundation. This foundation is encouraging 'healing workshops' for visitors to the country to experience natural healing for themselves. They state: "This program introduces you to the wisdom and practices of traditional, indigenous healers who combine the environment's natural resources with

their own inner guidance. Some of their methods have been handed down through generations; others are blended with their own artful innovations.

"Participants will:

- Learn about the healing resources of the rain forest
- Meet traditional healing practitioners of Western Belize
- Learn about the role played by natural healing in Belizean culture.

"Some participants come strictly for the experience. Others receive school credit. School affiliation is not necessary, and all participants receive a Certificate of Achievement. "Nine hours of

Spanish language instruction are included in the program." and Cornerstone invites, "if you would prefer not to attend Spanish language classes, please let us know when you submit your application."

In the West of Belize this could this be, along with Rosita Arvigo's own health program, the start of a healthy industry for Belize; an industry spreading knowledge and healing techniques to reach hundreds of thousands of people worldwide who are looking more and more to natural healing to go along, and even replace, the pills that have bound them to the chemical giants for so long and expensively.

As one healer has noted on the internet: "The big problem is that people who suffer from many of today's diseases have been fed the myths by the big drug companies in order to make money. The drug industry is a really big business. None of these companies care about treating any disease. All they care about is to develop drugs for sale and bring in billions of dollars each year. That's why none of them want you to know about natural remedies and just how good they work. The main reason? No natural remedy can be patented! This means they cannot make even close to the amount of money being made with prescription medications.

## The Greater Caribbean this Week: New UN Resolution on the Caribbean Sea

(Continued from Page 6)

economic and material well-being for a number of countries in the region. In this regard, the resolution invites Member States to become Contracting Parties to the relevant international agreements aimed at strengthening maritime security and promoting the protection of the marine environment of the sea against pollution, as well as implementing sustainable management programmes for fish stock and implementing programmes to counter the impoverishment of marine biodiversity.

The resolution also encourages the initiatives embarked on by the States and countries of the region to create conditions favourable to sustainable development and to fight against poverty and inequality. It also salutes the work undertaken thus far by the ACS in the areas of sustainable tourism, trade, transport and natural disasters.

In view of the immensity of the task ahead, the Parties to the resolution request the support of the United Nations organs, including the Global Environmental Fund and the international community, for the work of the countries of the region as well as environmental protection organisations. In fact, a general

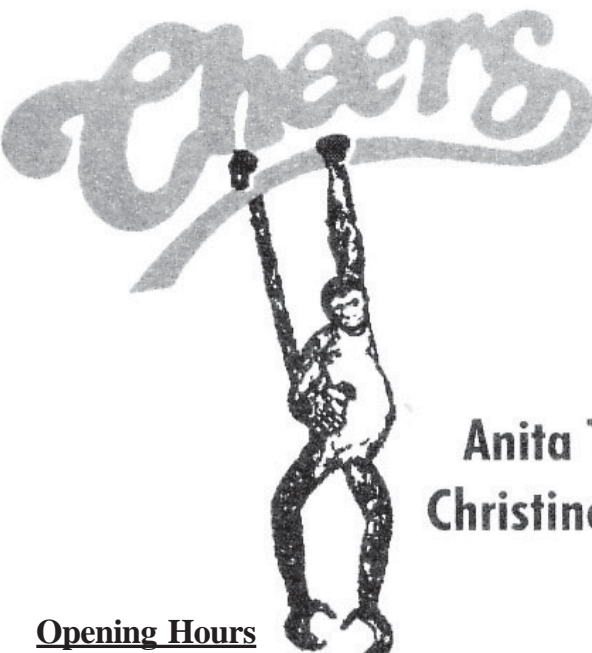
appeal is launched for everyone to provide assistance and support for the management, protection and sustainable use of the resources of the Caribbean Sea.

There is no doubt that through the adoption of this resolution the community of Greater Caribbean nations has resolutely advanced toward the fundamental objective of having the Caribbean Sea declared a special zone. On

three occasions the resolution makes reference to this concept, which is dear to the adherents of the International Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (1994) and the Mauritius Declaration and Strategy (2005), which advocate for the principles and intents declared at the summits to lead to concrete actions. Resolution A/C.2/61/

L.30, like any other resolution, expresses wishes. It is important to enforce it and to adopt new projects and activities with a view to strengthening the Caribbean Sea Initiative and achieving its final objective.

*Dr Watson Denis is the Political Advisor at the Secretariat of the Association of Caribbean States..*



**With a  
Tropical Twist**

Tel: 822-8014  
Res:/Fax: 820-2062  
Int.: 501-822-8014

Mile 31 1/4  
Western Highway  
BELIZE, Central America

Mailing Address: Box 346, Belmopan  
E-Mail: [chrissy@cheersrestaurant.bz](mailto:chrissy@cheersrestaurant.bz)

**Anita Tupper  
Christine Tupper**

**Opening Hours**  
Monday - Saturday 6 a.m. - 8:30 p.m.  
Sunday & Holidays 7 a.m. - 7:30 pm.  
**Breakfast Lunch and Diner**



# TOPICAL TIDBITS

Godfrey Smith's challenge to the Belize City Council and open contempt for the UDP's meditation with the BTB, and his, "it ain't gonna happen," is pouring hot oil on an already inflammable situation. Even the Belize Chamber of Commerce has entered the picture at last, urged dialogne and warned that businesses are being affected by the continued deterioration of the city's infrastructure and that any public confrontation on the streets will irreparably damage the cruise tourism industry. Mr. Smith should reexamine his responsibilities and priorities as Minister of Tourism or else resign.



## Ombudsman & Integrity Commission

Both these organizations were created to help safeguard the people of Belize against crime and corruption. Neither body works and both are impotent for the same reason. Government gave them their task with great ballyhoo but did not give them the tools or finance to achieve even modest advances against official crime and corruption.

In a recent case in Northern Island the Ombudsman (woman) has exposed years of officially sponsored crime cover-up and even murder against high police officials and their political bosses.

It is time that Belize's Ombudsman and members of the Integrity Commission went public and declared that there was no point in continuing their work

as long as they are hamstrung by government's lack of cooperation and lack of finance. My advise to both organizations is disband and don't let Government pretend anymore that you have teeth and are doing anything to safeguard the rights of Belizeans!

## A Boost for Belize!

They look at places where they can lay back, take off their shoes and settle in for a long time," says Tom Kelly, who has written a series of books about the ins and outs of buying in foreign markets, including, "Cashing In on a Second Home In Mexico." He adds: "Their location choices have always been affected by costs as well. In the past, cheap living have driven and sustained strong expatriate movements. Members of the "Lost Generation" in Paris during the 1920s, for example, were able to survive there on a song. That may not be as true as in the past, but the cost factor is still a major determinant of where a lot of Americans choose to buy. So where are the prime up-and-coming markets for second home buyers? Kelly says the top six hottest markets for 2007 will be The Bay Islands of Honduras, Belize, the South Coast of Mexico, Croatia, Turkey, and Panama.

## Musa take note!

From the web: "The Venezuelan army will help Nicaragua build a road to connect the swampy Caribbean coast with the rest of the country, in the latest effort by President Hugo Chavez to bring Managua into his bloc of leftist allies. Nicaraguan Transport Minister Pablo Fernando Martínez said in a newspaper interview published Monday that a Venezuelan general visited Nicaragua two weeks ago for talks on the plan to construct 310 miles of road at a cost of \$350 million. Martínez told the El Nuevo Diario daily that "the Venezu-

elan army, together with the Nicaraguan army and as far as possible the ministry" would build the road from Puerto Cabezas on the coast to the town of Rio Blanco in the interior. Venezuela's aid will be free, he said." Better a new road network in Belize than phoney cheap oil and so called interest 'debt' relief!



## Cruise ship bug!

Recently, the highly-contagious 'cruise ship' bug shut down the Hilton Washington Dulles Airport hotel after

100 guests and employees fell ill. The hotel stopped taking reservations on Wednesday and started relocating guests. After a top-to-bottom cleaning, the property plans to reopen Tuesday. According to the Centers for Disease Control, most cruiship outbreaks start with infected food, then spread person-to-person. The medical advice is, 'don't shake hands' - and so be friendly but distant with those cruise ship passengers.

## Does Belize need a jungle girl?

A Cambodian girl who disappeared aged eight has been found after living wild in the jungle for 19 years, police say. She is believed to be Rochom P'ngieng, who disappeared while tending buffalo on the edge of the jungle in remote northern Rattanakiri province. Her father says he has identified her through scars and will have DNA tests taken to prove she is his daughter. But whatever, the girl has already brought enormous international publicity and wealth to the tiny village where she was found!

## Visit The Belize Zoo

### The Best Little Zoo In The World

## The Magical Biodiversity of the Runaway Creek Nature Reserve



Sharon Matola, the Belize Zoo Dr. Gil Boese, Foundation for Wildlife Conservation

The Runaway Creek Nature Reserve, under ownership and management for the Foundation for

Wildlife Conservation, FWC, and Belize's own Birds Without Borders, BWB, provides a forest sanctuary for many rare species of plants and animals.

For instance, the spider monkey is a happy inhabitant of this important tract of tropical forest.

This is a monkey known to occur in tall, continuous tropical forest. Here in Belize, spider monkeys are known from the Bladen Nature Reserve, in the south, and in and around the Rio Bravo Conservation Management Area, in north-western Belize.

But surprise!!! A healthy population of spider monkeys lives in the forest

found between Belize City and Belmopan!! This is the magical Runaway Creek Nature Reserve.

Mammal experts note that the spider monkey is either "usually locally extinct although common in some protected areas".

Taking this statement into consideration, The Runaway Creek Nature Reserve stands as a vital forest sanctuary, poised to secure the survival of this rare species into the future.

The Runaway Creek Nature Reserve provides these fast-moving spider monkeys with an expansive area where they can swing from branch-to-branch and

dine on a variety of fruits such as sapadillo, fig and ramon.

Field researchers from Birds Without Borders witnessed a spider monkey in Runaway Creek nature Reserve giving birth! Considering that the female breed every 2 to 4 years only, this was quite a special and rare sighting.

This exciting "birth event" underscores that the Runaway Creek Nature Reserve, in our Belize District, is alive and kicking with vibrant biodiversity.... Spider Monkeys and much, much more!!!



# "Nothing for We" say Toledo Conservation & Cultural Groups

**By INdependent Weekly's Toledo Correspondent**

Mr. Kenneth Williams and Ms. C. Ross of the Belize Tourist Board met this last 17th and 18th of January at Nature's Way in Punta Gorda Town with executives of the Toledo Eco Tourism Association, Mr. Vicente Sacul, Mr. Mr. Candido Coh, Mr. Reyes Chun and the urban part of the TEA. The Punta Gorda Conservation Committee Chairlady, Ms Leela Vernon MBE, also president of the Toledo branch of the National Kriol Council, Mr. Roberto Echeverria of the Toledo Tour Guides Association, Mr. Oscar Cal Chairman of the Toledo Rural Bus Drivers Association, Ms. Cordellia Shal of Earthwatch Institute, Mr. Oscar Burke Chairman of Rosewood Studio and, members of these associations were present.

Mr. Sacul and Mr. Reyes began the meeting explaining how the programs they are promoting are the tourism part of the proposed Toledo People's Eco Park Plan, and that they were designed to benefit all sectors of the Toledo community. The private business owners, hotels, restaurants, taxi drivers, tour guides and operators, local business, the major community-based cultural groups, the arts and crafts producers, and the non-governmental organizations working for conservation and sustainable development in Toledo District.

After a very informative meeting the group visited Laguna Village and San Jose Village TEA groups. They checked guest houses, enjoyed a crafts making demonstration, music, dance, and dinners with the members families.

Early Thursday morning, the tour continued with breakfast with families in San Antonio, and a visit to San Miguel and Medina bank guesthouses.

After lunch in Punta Gorda, the group met with the Punta Gorda Conservation Committee. They discussed the plan for a small cruise ship to visit Toledo, (see INdependent Reformer Newspaper, January 19th for more information) and the plan for a six day eco cultural nature conservation tour package, including a day for the East Indian, Garifuna, Mestizo, Kriol, Maya, and others in Toledo.

Ms. Vernon, "While I'm the president of the Toledo Kriol Council, I'm speaking here as Chairlady of the Punta Gorda Conservation Committee, representing all our peoples in Toledo. We need Belize Tourist Board's help, our youth are going into crime because there is no employment here for them, we have designed these

plans to create employment, but the government has continued to ignore us. We have one of the richest districts, but we get so little help to develop what we have."

Edwin, representative of the Garifuna group, "It's not, that we have not been planning, we have, but our



Leela Vernon (Photo by richrd Holder)

plans have not been endorsed by our government".

Leela, "That's right, I have been in this group for over 10 years, (the Punta Gorda Conservation Committee was founded in 1995 and registered in 2000) and I have gone on the radio, written the newspapers, and a group of us even went to protest this neglect. In Belize City we met with Paul Rodriguez, Belize's Ombudsman, went on national TV, and still nothing happened. **I'll tell you truly, I'm so disappointed and I'm angry. I'm beginning to think it's time we really make a big protest to try and encourage the government to recognize and help us, nothing else has worked.**"

Tony Ramlam, of the East Indian group, "we have a lot of youths who really need help, we are really punishing down here. My father left me some good land that I want to pass on to my son. But now I'm forced to sell it to someone from outside who is paying less than it is worth, but I have to, so I can pay for my children's education. I've been a licensed tour guide since 1988. **I'm not renewing my license because while we have these good programs to attract the tourists, but the government won't help us to further develop them.** I have known Mr. Chet for over 30 years, and he has been trying to help us for as long as I can remember, he knows us and we know and trust him. Why

won't the government support him and us in our efforts to help ourselves?

Leela, "if the Belize Tourist Board will really support and help us we can make it. Mr. Ramclam is right, you are the key people, you are in product development, we are expressing ourselves fully and clearly, you are Belizeans, you are part of us, you have children, you know what we are talking about. We need your help. I know you have people above you, who might want to continue to put us down, but we ask you please, don't let them."

Edwin, "Many things have been taken from us here, and used and made big up north. We had the first variety show, it started here, but was taken and made large in Belize City. We had the first tourism village for small cruise ships, the Habibara Grinigu Cerro Project, but government refused to support it, and now the only one is in Belize City. So many things have been taken from Toledo. **What we are asking is simple, we want you to help us to continue to work on these projects**

**here and make something good for our people out of them.** Then maybe we can say, we aren't forgotten after all."

Mr. Williams, "We will need a more detailed plan for the cruise ship and other projects you are proposing, so we can properly lobby for them, I have asked Mr. Schmidt for this. "

Edwin, "Sir, you ask that we give you more detailed plan. We are willing to send you this, but as I said, we have done this before and it has been taken to be used somewhere else, by and for someone else. We will send this, but I ask you not to forget us.

Leela, "Yes, this is true, I also have known Mr. Schmidt, our consultant for many years now, I know he has gone to our Prime Minister, Minister Briceno, Minister Mark Espat, and other Ministers many times on our behalf, they all know him and that this is true, and that they have refused to help. We have all tried and spent so many years trying. I have even written a song and

(Please Turn To Page 11)



The Toledo Correspondent for the INdependent Reformer wishes on behalf of all his many admirers here in Toledo, to wish the Right Honorable George C. Price a belated Happy Birthday and our wishes for many more, in gratitude for all he has done and continues to do for our beloved Belize.

I would also like to thank Senor Fidel Castro for the more efficient light bulbs he gave to our family and hundreds of other families in Punta Gorda Town. With them our family's light bill was cut in half! For many years now are people in the rural villages have received free medical attention from Cuban doctors. Now the urban people are also assisted to help reduce their cost of electricity, which is the highest in all of Central America! Viva La Revolution Cubano.

(A Paid Advertisement)



# What Happened to the UDP and Political Reform?

## Contributed

When the UDP was in office, with the Rt. Honorable Manuel Esquivel as Prime Minister, the UDP was the champion of Political Reform. It was the Rt. Honorable Manuel Esquivel who first proposed a Political Reform Commission. At that time, it seemed the UDP wanted good Government.

The Commission was to be a joint effort and was set up with the then Attorney General, Dean Barrow, as its chairman. We believe the Commission failed because the PUP objected to his appointment.

During the 1998 campaign the PUP capitalized on the promise they made to the people that there would be Political Reform if they were elected to office. They did win, however, 9 years have passed and there has been no Political Reform despite the fact the Political Reform Commission worked hard and presented its report with great recommendations. The PUP went back on its promise. The PUP turned its back upon the people and has refused make the recommended reforms into law. Corruption that the Reforms would have helped eliminate grew bolder and Party's cronies grew richer at the taxpayers' expense.

When the UDP lost the 1998 election, Prime Minister, Manuel Esquivel, as a true statesman, stepped down as head of the party. Hon. Dean Barrow then became head of the UDP. Did the UDP's hope for Reform and Good Government die when the Honorable



*Former Prime Minister Manuel Esquivel*  
Manuel Esquivel stepped down?

The UDP now appears to be against Political Reform and an elected Senate. During the past 7 years since the Political Reform Commission made its recommendations the UDP has not made any effort of consequence to have the recommendations made law. The UDP leaders stepped back and let the status quo remain. UDP Party heads have not proceeded with Reform and have been against an elected Senate.

An elected Senate would be answerable to the people, not to a political party. It is one of the best means of stopping corruption. One the reasons the post-Esquivel UDP has offered for not supporting an elected Senate is that the UDP is entitled to their turn in office, too!

The UDP gives the appearance that they want to enter into power with the same laws that have, since Independence, provided means for political parties to administer the Government and gain personal wealth through corruption.

The fact that the UDP and PUP do not wish to usher in Political Reform with an elected Senate clearly shows that they know and realize that Political Reform and

an elected Senate would prevent the present dictatorship from continuing, curb corruption and provide penitentiary sentences for the ministers who attempt to engaged in it. It appears that they are aware that there would be no free rides and are afraid of the consequences that would be created by political reform and an elected Senate. Afraid they would then be subject to prison in the same manner as the poor.

Belize does not need more ministers in office who wish to obtain their retirement funds through the issuance of bloated contracts, spurious loans or other forms of chicanery. Such activities have brought about staggering Government debts and financial distress that has required increases in taxes. Such tax increases have now proceeded to the point where they are hard to maintain and are creating a downward spiral in the economy.

Efforts to stop bad judgment or corruption have failed. Seven good and well-intentioned Ministers formed an alliance in an attempt to prevent further abuses by the Government. All they gained was the title of G-7. The Prime Minister, Said Musa, quickly dispatched them. They soon learned that Belize's Government was a form of dictatorship, that it was not a dictatorship of the proletariat, and that the Prime Minister was and is the dictator. He dictated to them and most had to get in line or be left out.

It appears that both political mass parties want to maintain the dictatorship, they do not want a democracy, and they do not want to stop corruption. They want

to use, not help the people. Promises to stop corruption—sometime in the future—have no value. Promises that they do not intend to perform are a politician's bread and butter, they are not sincere and the promises are forgotten as soon as the vote is in.

In 1998, to gain votes, the PUP promised Political Reform. They received the votes, however, 9 years has passed and reform has not passed. In 2003 the Prime Minister, the Right Honorable Said Musa, publicly recognized the devastating corruption that existed and promised to put an end to Ralph Oranges' corruption. What happened? Can't the Honorable Said Musa overcome internal opposition? The Honorable Said Musa was the champion who called for and put together the Political Reform Commission: he instructed them, supported them, gave them direction and their marching orders.

One should not consider voting for a candidate who does not, or has not, put the country first ahead of the personal gain that he can obtain by abuses of office. One should not support a Political Party that refuses Political Reform and wants to continue corruption that has transpired for 25 years. The political parties are not entitled to and should not have turns at corruption.

Did the change of party leaders change the good Government goals of the UDP? If the change did, the change was not good for either the UDP or the country of Belize. If the change of leadership changes the UDP goals for good Government then it is time for another change.

## RBTT loses big in Belize

### Trinidad Express

The story is told that when Albert Einstein died he went straight to heaven. There he was told that his room was not ready and he had to wait in a dormitory which he would share with other people. St Peter then introduced Einstein to his room-mates. "Albert, this is Jim. He has an IQ of 180!"

"That's wonderful," said Einstein, "we can discuss mathematics." Then he was introduced to his second roommate. "This is Harry. His IQ is 150." "Fantastic," Einstein remarked, "we can discuss physics." Then St Peter called the third room-mate forward. "This is Eddy. His IQ is 100." "Great," replied Einstein, "we can discuss the theatre." Just then a fourth man stepped forward and explained, "I'm Norm, your fourth room-mate. I'm sorry but my IQ is only 70." "No problem," said Einstein with a smile. "Tell me, where

do you think interest rates are headed?"

You don't need to be Einstein to wonder about the bankers at RBTT. While the basis of the bank's expansion into the region is Trinidad's liquidity, in other words the money Trinidad-based people and businesses pour into the bank, there are increasing concerns of how that money is used. Customers catch their royal while two law firms, the heads of which are Directors of the Bank, get all the bank's business and anyone who wants a mortgage or any other legal instrument has to go to one of these two firms otherwise no deal. Most other organisations tend to have a conflict of interest policy regarding its Directors. Not RBTT and the other Trinidad banks.

Recently, RBTT lost a bundle in Belize. Essentially there is a man named Prosser who was at the time being forced to pay a huge amount by the US

Courts for gutting a telephone company. He is a banker and investor from the US Virgin Islands whose reputation for sharp practice is legendary. While he was being forced by the Court to repay millions in the US, RBTT lent him money in return for useless paper in the Belizean telephone company. First of all, RBTT should have done a due diligence. Secondly they should have asked why would a man with a bank want to borrow money using security that was not his bank but paper in a company in which his role was disputable to the extent that all the parties including the Government were in litigation. The RBTT bosses who did that should have been forcefully initiated in the mobile business - they should all have been in a cell. Nothing came out of the incident and nobody's posterior was on the line, whether telephone or firing, as a result.

Now one hears that RBTT is thinking

of literally pouring money down the drain by investing it in a canal somewhere else in Central America. It is difficult to understand the Pizarro or even Bizarro fascination with that part of the world. Is it that there are no investment opportunities in the Caribbean? Or is it a deal of the sort that bank managers are reputed to score on the sale of repossessed property? One hears about houses that have been seized by the Bank for default on mortgages then being sold at ridiculous rates because of underhand payments to the bankers. Certainly, an upstanding organization like RBTT will never indulge in that kind of illegal practice and this is what makes its Central American adventures even more mysterious. Why are they investing in Banana Republics? Is it because they don't give a fig? Or is it because they are all slippery?

-Tony Deyal



# "Nothing for We" say Toledo Conservation & Cultural Groups

(Continued from Page 9)

have it on a CD, I call it "Nothing For We" it goes like this:

Nothing for We! Come to Toledo, Come to Toledo, where all the action is. We got the tourist attraction here. We got Maya culture, Garifuna culture, Mestizo culture, and no forget me, Kriol culture. Money de flow, money de flow, all around the country. But nothing for we, nothing for we. Not only Leela de see this. Open the door, open the door, make the money go into this here district. Stop the neglect, show some respect, so we can live in dignity!

We want our leaders to listen to us. We are the ethnic leaders and we want respect. We are the poorest district and the most in need but it's not because we don't have the resources or that we haven't tried, it's because of the lack of support from our government.

"What we are on our knees for, and begging for, is simply an endorsement. There are funders and wealthy people who want to help us. There has been offers, but because we don't have government support we can't accept them. Mr. Chet found one who only wanted a letter from our leaders saying they supported us."

Chet: "That is correct, I had a wealthy woman from the States who offered US\$37,000 to help us with the six day Eco Cultural tour and to restore the old rice mill plaza and building to use as a temporary Toledo house of culture. Ms Vernon and I met with our area representative, Honorable Michael Espot, and he did meet with the lady who said she would be happy to help, and only wanted a letter showing government support. Honorable Espot said Toledo has not received a fair share, and if a foreigner could give this to help us, he would ask our Prime Minister for matching funds, so we could really make progress with this good plan. But after checking with those higher up he refused to provide the needed letter. I personally went to see Prime Minister Musa, who said he had looked at the building while meeting with Minister Espot in PG, and that he thought it would be a good place to start the program. The Prime Minister had previously sent two letters of support for the Punta Gorda

Conservation Committee and the eco park plan. Prime Minister Musa suggested I see his son, Yassar Musa, head of NICH to tell him of his support and the plans. I waited in Belize City for two days for an appointment with Yassar Musa, and later wrote him several letters. He refused to see me or answer the letters and phone calls. (for further instances of this see Mr. Richard Hulse's Independent Reformer article, "Culture of Exclusion: Belizean Theater and Art, a view from the street" January 5, 2007)

If one looks at the annual budget for NICH over the years, and how much has actually been allotted for Toledo, it will be obvious that Toledo has not received their fair share, as our area representative said. even though they are always sending for Paul Nabor, Leela Vernon, our Maya groups and Andy Palacio hails from Toledo. Our government likes to say the people of Toledo are not forgotten, if this is true, does it mean that they are aware of our needs but choose to neglect us?

Mr. Coc, "I'm from the Maya Day Group, we want to make a reproduction of a pre Hispanic Maya coastal village. We have the help of Dr. Heather Mckillgs, the worlds foremost archeologist on the Maya of Southern Belize. Our area representative, Mike Espot said he would help us once we had a piece of government land surveyed, we did this, and now he says he would like to help us but he can't make the Minister of Lands Briceno help us if he doesn't want to.

Mr. Schmidt, "we wrote PACT for funds to help us develop this project but they told us that unless the government shows some interest in protecting this land, they can't help, so far the Minister says he will help, but when the group traveled to Belmopan to meet with those in charge, they aren't there, even though they gave us an appointment."

Mr. Chun, "We have gone over our plans and shown what we have to offer. Now it's up to our government to open the door and let the money flow in." Mr. Williams, "We will try our best."

Oscar, "This visit might just be part of their job, they're getting paid to be here, we don't know what will happen. But we hope these people

are in a position to make a difference, that someone will listen to them, and that we have opened their eyes."

While we have expressed our disappointment with the discrimination we all in Toledo have experienced from Toledo Tourist Board and the Ministry of Tourism Mark Espot in the past, the fact that Toledo has been forgotten may not be all that bad, because now that we have seen what kind of problems the big cruise ships and mass tourism has brought our people up north, we have been able to design our programs to hopefully help us to prevent them. The Punta Gorda Conservation Committee has asked those of us at Rosewood Recording Studio to help organize a musical presentation in support of these plans, and the Toledo People's Eco Park for the Baron Bliss weekend, 10th of March, where Nabor, Leela and many of our local artists will

perform. I hope by then the Belize Tourist Board and Ministry of Tourism will have supported us by then, so the event will be a positive celebration of our government's help, instead of a demonstration in protest of their continued lack of help."

Pastor Tony Ramclam delivered a prayer thanking the Lord for the visit from BTB representatives and asking that they be strengthened in their efforts to communicate to the head of the BTB, Mrs. Tracy Tegar/Panton and our Minister of Tourism Hon. Godfrey Smith, the great need for their help and support for the plans that the people of Toledo have worked so hard to develop. Everyone parted with a good feeling, and high hopes BTB will lobby the Government of Belize for support of a small cruise ship, and the Six-Day Eco Culture Tour for Toledo. That they will walk their talk!

## **FOR RENT**

**Professional single, non-smoking, quiet tennant sought for a self-contained, one-bedroomed, H&C water, AC apartment in Ladyville.**

**Call 225-3586 anytime**

**For an online version of the  
INdependent Reformer  
visit us at**

**[http://www.belizenorth.com/  
independentreformer.htm](http://www.belizenorth.com/independentreformer.htm)**

**OR**

**[http://belizenews.com/  
independentonline.pdf](http://belizenews.com/independentonline.pdf)**

**Fly Tropic Air - Fly Tropic Air - Fly Tropic Air**  
***"The Airline Of Belize"***



# Private Listing

## Lake Gardens, Ladyville “Chalet d’ Eve”



Beautiful 2900 sq foot home on ¼ acre property in **highly secure** neighborhood, 10-12 feet above sea level with on site hurricane shelter

**HOUSE**

- \* 5 bedrooms (ac unit in each)
- \* 4 full bathrooms
- \* 2 kitchens
- \* 3 fully screened porches
- \* breakfast room/ study/ games room
- \* walk-in pantry
- \* mahogany cabinets
- \* utility room

**SAFETY/EMERGENCY FEATURES**

- \* 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><b>1/2 acre lots in Burrel Boom starting at \$10K Call 600-1627 for details</b></p>	<p><b>10 acre plots in Burrel Boom starting at \$50K Call 600-1627 for details</b></p>	<p><b>12 acre plots in Ladyville starting \$120,000-50K Call 600-1627 for details</b></p>
--	--	---



# Belize Oil - Boon or Bane

☞ (Continued From Page 1)  
ogy.”

**IW.** BNE said they had the help of a spiritual advisor in locating the oil. Anything to that?

**JC.** “Utter bull sh... ah, hogwash. The oil business is a game of high technology. Ouija boards are for dreamers and crystal balls belong on crystal monkeys.”

**IW.** So you are impressed with the BNE technology?

**JC.** “The discovery was definitely brilliant!”

**IW.** But there seems to be a lot of problems now.

**JC.** “Ben Franklin flew a kite into a rain cloud and found electricity, but certainly you can’t credit him for the electric light or the electric chair. The discovery of oil at Spanish Lookout was a completely separate action from the production of that oil. The discovery was a matter of competent technology, while the production has been a comedy of errors fuelled by arrogance, incompetence, ignorance and an integrity vacuum. Different people-different results.”

**IW.** The same company though, isn’t it?

**JC.** “Yes, and maybe even some of the same people, but a super scientist can be an awful accountant. BNE people arrived in Belize with one of those dim-witted “new Gringo in Belize” attitudes where they had all the answers, even claiming they could control the corruption in our government. They patronizingly talked down to all of us. Such arrogance has destroyed a lot more new arrivals than have survived it. BNE was not only a disaster at public relations, but both the oil people and government employees were ignorant of oil production issues. The government had no experience and insisted on fumbling ahead instead of acquir-

ing the necessary specialists to protect our national resource interests. You just don’t put a young inexperience employee in charge of a multi-million dollar (perhaps billion dollar) enterprise, but GOB did. BNE’s ignorance splashed all over the place with their blatant misinformation about what we could expect during production. It was because of this information that Spanish Lookout contacted me. And the whole situation was complicated further with a lack of integrity in both camps. GOB decided to arbitrarily increase the agreed upon tax some 60% as soon as commercial oil production was confirmed with no regard to the sanctity of original agreements. Atrocious and shameful act! BNE talked about the purity of their actions and goals while making compromising deals with politicians as they were trying to screw the Mennonites. It is an ugly scene of Greed Monsters gorging themselves until they find they are eating their own tails.”

**IW.** Maybe we can cover some of these problems later, but a big question in everybody’s mind is if the oil is going to be good for Belize. The size of the discovery seems to get smaller with each report. Just how much oil is there?

**JC.** “It is a major discovery and the revenues could have a significant impact on Belize. The total oil reports are inaccurate and undervalued for some unstated agenda. When we were evaluating Belize back in the 70s it was generally agreed that there was one definite oil province from the fault controlled Belize River northward. There should be several oil fields discovered in this quadrant north of the Belize River. It was also a consensus that the Toledo area had good potential and Orange Walk was promising, al-

though exploration and drilling there would be expensive because of the marsh lands. Offshore was not even considered because the environmental aspects of our barrier reef were just too sensitive. Also, Chetumal Bay looked promising for gas except that the Mexico/Belize boundary was in the middle of it and there was no way to deal with Mexico on petroleum.”

**IW.** But don’t you believe that the oil will eventually be a great benefit to Belize?

**JC.** “No, not necessarily. I knew a man who bought his son a workover rig and set him up in the oil well service business. Business was very good, but the son went broke anyway. He sent his son to college and then turned over a good environmental company to him. Two years later, the business had increased ten fold and things looked good, but the following year it went bankrupt with an overwhelming debt. Our government has the same track record, perhaps even worse. If the oil revenues are allowed to go into our political general fund, they will be pissed away through the same incompetence, corruption and dishonesty that has resulted in our government increasing our national debt to more than two billion dollars with no tangible benefits going to our citizens. The man I spoke of above did not finance his son again in a new venture, nor should we place even more of our precious national resource revenues in the hands of such gross incompetent spendoholics as our political leaders. It is well known that it is folly to hire an alcoholic to run your bar. If our politicians get the revenues, in five years our national debt would probably increase ten fold and we will find that whatever revenues we expected from our future oil would al-

ready have been hocked as collateral for more loans.”

**IW.** That’s a pretty bleak assessment. Are you saying that our oil revenues could be good for Belizeans if handled in a better way? And if so, what would be a better way?

**JC.** “It is fascinating to me that no one asks where the Hell the two billion dollars went because we certainly have nothing to show for it. It is obvious that if that money had been invested better the benefits would have been better. And yes, there is a better way to handle our oil revenues.

“The Shetland Islands, although part of Scotland, were always treated as a bastard stepchild, and seemed to be last on the list whenever parliament doled out any funds. Then oil was discovered in the East Shetland Basin and the oil was handled through the Sullom Voe terminal in Shetland. The Shetlands had the oil taxes directed to a special trust fund to be spent exclusively on education, health, art, sports, and financial development. Today they have the best schools and hospitals in Scotland. Education is free and it is compulsory that every child attend school. Qualified students have scholarships for college. Theater groups and sports competitions are active on each of the islands. New businesses helped from the trust have dropped unemployment to less than 3%. They also have the rest roads in the British Isles.

“Belize can have the same results if the 7.5% oil royalty is placed in the same kind of trust beyond political control to be used exclusively for education, health, arts, sports and job development. The taxes, which are separate from the royalty, could continue to disappear down the bottomless pit of our general fund.”

More of this interview next week...

# Dis Da Fu We - addiction

☞ (Continued From Page 4)  
dering vegetable chop suey, even veggie chow mein.

I almost succeeded. Once. I had actually ordered wonton soup and sat there feeling quite good about myself. Until I got a whiff of the sweet and sour chicken being served at the next table. I called the waiter back and changed my order.

But I didn’t enjoy it. And I could hardly look at myself in the mirror by the hand wash stand when it was over.

Next time, I told myself, I WILL eat something good for me. I will.

I held out a whole week. Seven whole

days. Until tonight.

Those were the thoughts running through my mind as I reached down for a French fry. It’s hard to tell, in the dark, exactly what is fry, and what is fried chicken bits.

I had a sudden flashback to the days when my friends and I used to go eat Tux Fried Chicken and sit by the seawall across from Animal Park after going to La Femme or Legends. Of accidentally biting into a jalapeno pepper, thinking it’s a fry. Of us all laughing, and holding them up to the street light trying to tell the difference. Except the people who don’t like pepper. I find some of

them have very little sense of humor.

Those were fun times, sharing chicken with friends.

Only tonight I am eating alone. Again, unnaturally.

When did such an innocent meal turn into a secret, solitary pleasure?

Perhaps its connected to the collapse of the economy, being the only thing people can afford when they feel like going on a little spree...No three dolla tonight, gimme five, or better make that a seven-fifty. With fried rice, no fries. What the hell, wan li side a sweet and sowa too, dah pay-day my gyal/bwoy! Live a little.

Once upon a time we usta go to Yin Kee for steak or shrimp or, what was that thing called we used to eat sometimes when we really felt special or wanted to impress someone...ubster, wobster, no. no, lobster! Do you remember eating that? It’s kinda like shrimp but bigger and juicier. They have these pinchy things on the front like a crab?

But maybe you are too young. ...

Maybe you are of the generation that only knows about Li Chee or Kick Down Fence or Shirleys or Belizean Fried Chicken. You wouldn’t remem- (Please Turn To Page 15) ☞



## Your weekly HOROSCOPE

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

You may get upset with peers or relatives. Look into alternate means of supporting your financial burdens. Romantic encounters are evident through travel or educational pursuits. You will be able to pick up on future trends if you keep your eyes peeled for unique ideas.

Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

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

Your creative imagination will help you in coming up with unique ideas. You can discuss your intentions and ideas with your colleagues or friends this week. Get involved in creative projects that could turn into moneymaking ventures. You can make alterations to your appearance that everyone will admire.

Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

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

Make those phone calls and pay your bills. You are ready to blow up and your stress level has gone into over drive. Your philanthropic contributions will bring you praise. Don't let your emotions interfere with your professional integrity. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

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

You can offer your help to others but back off if they appear to be offended by your persistence. If you join intellectual or cultural groups, you should meet individuals who stimulate you. Trips will be more than adventurous. Lovers may prove unworthy of your affection. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

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

You will learn a great deal from the foreigners you meet. You can have quite the romantic adventure if you take time to get to know your mate all over again. Relationships will be emotional this week. Sit back. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

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

Watch for empty promises that may give you false hope. Spend time getting into physical activities with your lover. Jealousy may be a contributing factor to your emotional ups and downs. Do something that will be stimulating and creative. Your

lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

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

Put aside any decisions concerning your position at work. You need to pamper yourself for a change. You can make changes that will enhance your appearance. Help if you can, but more than likely it will be sufficient just to listen. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

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

You will be emotional about family matters. Those close to your heart may be difficult to reason with. Go after your goals and don't be afraid to ask for assistance. Spend time with friends or family. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

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

Organization will be the key to avoiding discord and family feuds. Don't count your chickens before they hatch. Residential moves will be favorable, and larger quarters the most probable direction. Organize your day to avoid any setbacks that might ignite temper flare-ups. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

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

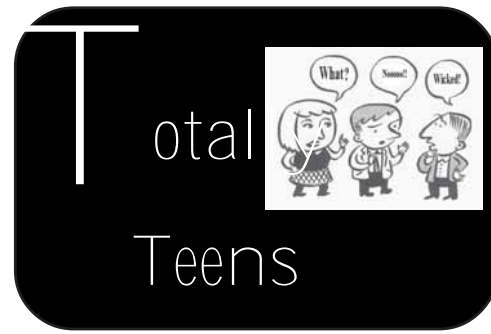
Look into physical activities that will help get rid of some of that tension you may be feeling. Pamper yourself; you deserve it. You would be wise to socialize with as many people as possible. Look before you leap. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

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

Make plans to meet again in the near future. Real estate ventures will be to your advantage. You should consider getting your whole family involved in a project at home. Your self esteem will come back if you take part in organizational functions that allow you to be in the lime light. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

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

You can get others to do things for you but be sure not to overpay them or lend them money. Electrical problems may be an issue. Get involved in groups that can offer intellectual stimulation. This week is not the day to try to come people by giving them ultimatums. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.



## THINGS TO MAKE UR PARENTS THINK UR INSANE!!

1. Follow them around the house everywhere.
2. Moo when they say your name.
3. Run into walls.
4. Say that wearing clothes is against your religion.
5. Stand over them at four in the morning with a huge grin on your face and say, good morning sunshine
6. Pluck someone's hair out and yell, "DNA"
7. Have 20 imaginary friends that you talk to all the time.
8. In public yell, "No Mom/Dad, I will not make out with you!!"
9. Do what they actually tell you.
10. Jump off the roof, trying to fly.
11. Hold their hand and whisper to them, "I see dead people."
12. At everything they say yell, "Liar."
13. Try to swim in the floor.
14. Tap on their door all night

### Quotes from real teens

"Last night I was looking at the stars and I wondered... where the heck is my ceiling?"

"Never miss a good opportunity to shut the heck up!"

"They say to reach for the moon, even if you miss, you'll land among the stars. Do they not know the laws of gravity? If you miss, you'll come crashing back to earth..."

## Hunt for good food

With Anthony Hunt

## Chon Saan Palace

*Kelly Street, Belize City*



The most famous and most frequently visited of all Chinese restaurants in town, Chon Saan does not disappoint. Apart from the usual Chinese fare, they have an extensive menu of more adventurous items in addition to Japanese food such as sushi. I must say that their Beef in Black Bean sauce is extraordinary. As is their unique and truly amazing Singapore Style Curry Chow Mein. If you are in the mood for something lighter, their Hot and Sour Soup and Roast Pork Fried Rice are excellent. And the kids will love the crabs, fish and lobsters in the tanks...just don't tell them that they are actually for eating! And the waiters, the most pleasant in town. Mi done talk!!!!!!

\$6 and up. Open Daily, Lunch & Dinner



# Social Page



Senior Minister Emeritus George Price joins Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parilla in a toast.

## Citizen Oversight

University of Belize students got a lesson in "Citizen Oversight: Promoting Ethical Conduct in Government" on January 25<sup>th</sup> at their Belmopan campus. Guest speaker was Ken Kellner, Senior Counsel in the United States House Committee on Standards of Conduct. Kellner, who also lectures at Georgetown University in Washington D.C. in administrative law for paralegals, has extensive experience investigating cases of alleged misconduct by Members of Congress and staff.

He also served with the US Department of Justice Environment and Natural Resources Division representing the US government on federal courts in administrative and environmental law cases involving endangered species.

According to the U.S. Embassy, during his three day visit, he met with government officials, business leaders, stu-



Ken Kellner

dents, and other members of civil society to discuss the importance of ethical behavior in elected officials.

Kellner's visit was co-sponsored by the U.S. Embassy and the University of Belize.

## Letter to the Editor

(Continued From Page 2)

serious charges by an administrative agency and the police. This law firm, Firm X, had represented this individual over the course of several months, and consequently, had much confidential information about the matter in their files and in the heads of their attorneys. The administrative agency issuing the charges decided it wanted to be represented by Firm X. Firm X accepted the government representation and told its client, the individual about whom it had all sorts of confidential information, that Firm X was giving up its representation of him

— and then took the administrative agency on as a client in the same matter!!!!!!

This is one of the most egregious conflicts of interest I have ever seen.

Heads should have rolled, followed by a number of disbarments by the Bar Association. I tried to get the individual to bring a malpractice action against the law firm, but he wouldn't, and even if he had been willing, I'm not at all certain that he could have gotten any competent attorney to represent him.

Signed,  
Mary Toy



Fr. Smalls of Our Lady of the Way Church, kisses the ring of newly installed Bishop of Belize, Dorrick Wright at ordination ceremonies at SJC on January 20th.

## Dis Da Fu We - addiction

(Continued From Page 13)

ber Archies on Euphrates before going clubbing downstairs at Scruples.

But enough nostalgia, this thing might not just be my problem but a national trend. The slow, greasy sliding away of rice and beans and chicken and salad as the national dish. The death of Meegan beans and the rise of Friendship Fried Chicken. The raising of the collective cholesterol level and de-creolization of our cultural consciousness. Ahhhgh! Enough.

I am home. Safe and sound and satis-

fied. No one will ever know.

Suddenly a car pulls up next to me as I get out. One of my neighbors, looking harried yet determined. "You just coming in too? I ask.

"Yes, I ah, just run da town fi soting," he mumbles evasively.

"Oh, okay, well goodnight." I tell him. I didn't tell him he had catsup on his chin.

Guess I am not the only one.

But tomorrow, its veggies and steamed rice. I mean it this time. Really.

## Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister visits Belize

Belize City, January 24, 2007. On the occasion of the III Meeting of Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Cuban First Deputy Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez Parrilla paid an official visit to Belize between January 23<sup>rd</sup> and 24. During his presence in Belize Minister Rodríguez paid a courtesy call to Rt. Hon. Said Musa, Primer Minister and Minister of Finance and Hon. Francis Fonseca, Minister of Education, Labor and Attorney General.

The meeting was considered a fruitful opportunity to exchange ideas on the bilateral relation and international issues, particularly now when Cuba is the President of the Non-Alignment Movement and Belize of SICA.

As part of the program, both countries signed a health agreement that will improve the level of cooperation between Belize and Cuba in this area.

Minister Rodriguez stated that "the relations between Cuba and Belize are a model of a new set of international relations, with emphasis in cooperation and solidarity". On signing the agreement the Cuban official said that it "would be very beneficial to improve and expand the health services provide by the Cuban medical brigade rendering services in all districts of Belize".

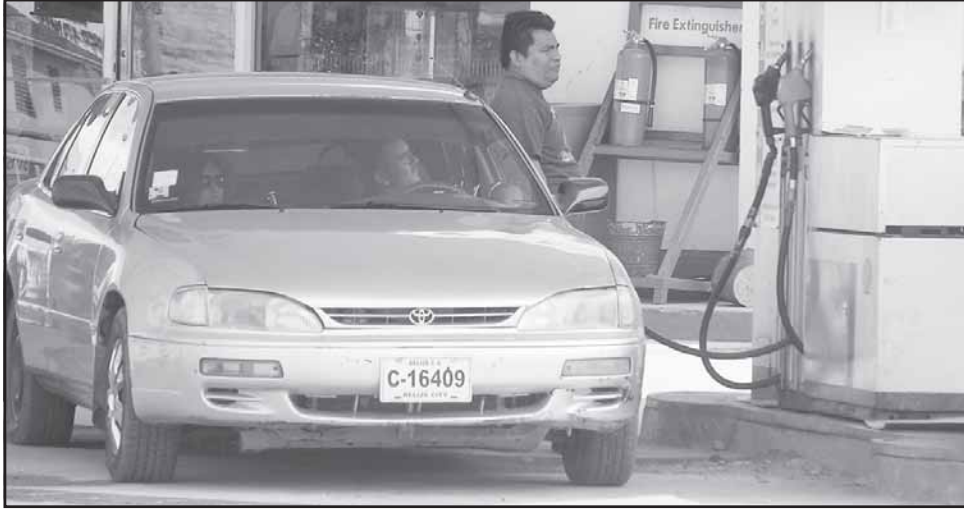
The Embassy of Cuba hosted a cocktail where the Cuban delegation socialized with representatives of the Government and Belize society. Among them, the Cuban official had the honor to meet with Father of the Nation George C. Price.

The Cuban delegation was composed by Ambassador Rogelio Sierra, Chief of the Latin American Division at the Ministry of Foreign Relations of Cuba, H.E. Eugenio Martínez, Ambassador to Belize and Omar Pereira, Advisor to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Visit INdependent at  
[www.belizenorth.com](http://www.belizenorth.com)



# RAM PUSS TAX ...



Whether acquisition costs jump high, jump low, GOB just pumps us some more.

➡ (Continued From Page 1)  
lower ranking civil servants and teachers (those without permission to sign vouchers at the gas stations) retirees, pensioners, single mothers, and the tourism sector.

Sirs, there is no hope for meaningful development when taxes on energy approach 300% or three times acquisition cost to the people of Belize. You know it and we know it. And soon the outside world will know what the Belizean government is up to.

Bear with me as I work through some related developments in the hemisphere, as it is unfolding before the Organization of American States. We must start paying closer attention to the developments at the OAS as many decisions there will continue to affect you, the Belizean reader personally, and the country as a whole.

Officious Belize will be participating shortly in the General Assembly (GA) of the OAS in Panama in June, 2007. The theme for the GA will be "Energy for Development". The draft declaration, which we've seen, says: ALL MEMBER STATES MUST BECOME AWARE (of the theme) AND ACT ON THIS CONCERN IN A TIMELY MANNER". Visit [www.oas.org](http://www.oas.org) (its in Spanish, English, French, and Portuguese)

Last week, Panama's Ambassador/Permanent Representative to the OAS, His Excellency Aristides Royo, submitted the Draft Declaration of Panama entitled "Energy for Development" for consideration by the Preparatory Committee of the General Assembly. He said the initiative represents his government's effort to acknowledge the major concerns of countries regarding the escalating energy problem in the hemisphere. Royo warned, "All our member states must become aware and act on this concern in a timely manner."

The way it works at the OAS is whichever country is chosen to host the next GA, sets the theme of that GA. And, basically, after consultations and at the end of the GA, there is a declaration of that chosen country encapsulating the tenets of the theme. So there will be a Declaration of Panama that all countries will accede to. Declarations have no teeth, per se, but try to set an "ubuntu-ized" (general consensus) tone for the work of the organization for the next year.

Anyway, the soon to be finalized draft, in the preparatory committee that Royo chairs, warns that high energy costs are putting a severe financial constraint on resources the countries of the Americas need for their de-

velopment programs.

The Panamanians argue that economic development and environmental conservation are complementary and form an integral part of the basic goals of the OAS. They also accentuate public-private sector alliances as vital to the promotion of the energy sector agenda in the hemisphere, and touch on the

effects of climate change and the need for research, promotion, development and increased use of renewable energy forms. The OAS Department of Sustainable Development is providing the working group and the Panamanian delegation with technical support.

What the documents don't reflect are the reasons for the high costs of energy. The Most Honorable Panamanian Ambassador to the OAS, as chair of the Preparatory Committee of the 2007 OAS/GA, needs to be sensitized to the excessive taxes, consumption taxes that hit the poor the hardest. You cannot reach those lofty millennium development goals, Mr. Ambassador, unless you collectively back off from taxing the poor of this hemisphere, in such a brutal manner with all these consumption taxes. It is inhumane and dastardly, really. They don't punish governments, they do the opposite: they punish the poor.

And, what will be Belize's excuse for taxing the poor in excess of two and half times of costs in fuel taxes when they get to the GA

in Panama? You really would not want to know. Trust me. North Americans complain when gasoline gets above US\$ 2 a gallon. Well, Belizeans are paying almost US\$ 5 gallon, in spite of President Chavez's largesse supposedly to the Government of Belize.

We, the working class people of Belize, pay two and a half times what you pay, America, (and make five times less a year in salary) a thousand times what Venezuelans pay, and we are really getting tired of this abusive arrangement. Mr. Chavez needs to understand, if he doesn't already know, that his foreign policy petro-diplomacy efforts are hurting us in Belize when he props up this morally, financially, and ethically bankrupt government here.

Authoritarian Rule by decree is not for us, Sir. Please leave us with what's left of our common law traditions to sort out our own mess. Keep your fuel, its not helping us. At least not right now.

*Ed. Note: the author served two separate tours at the OAS (7 years cumulative) under four Belizean Ambassadors.*

## Vision Inspired by the People



1 Cardinal Street, Belmopan  
Tel: 802-2926  
e-mail: [info@vip.org.bz](mailto:info@vip.org.bz)  
<http://www.vip.org.bz>

"Stand Up, Save Belize"

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As Belizeans we are each responsible for the welfare of our beloved country. Your participation in building Belize is therefore a civic and patriotic obligation.

VIP through this survey gives you the opportunity to input into the planning of our country's future by sharing your inspired vision and commitment.

Your response will be treated with the highest confidentiality and any published results will be aggregated in order to reflect only collective opinions.

Please write your answers and return it to us by post or electronic mail using our contact information above. Every idea is important to us. Please feel free to also call our office.

**Questions: To make Belize a better country to live, work and play:**

1. **WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE THREE PRIORITY AREAS THAT THE NEXT GOVERNMENT MUST FIX?**
2. **WHAT SUGGESTIONS CAN YOU OFFER TO FIX THESE PROBLEMS?**
3. **WHAT COMMITMENT AND SACRIFICE ARE YOU WILLING TO MAKE TO HELP FIX THE PROBLEM?**

**"VISION WITHOUT ACTION IS ONLY AN ILLUSION"**  
**We thank you for acting now to SAVE BELIZE!**