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The Heat is On - Protest Season 2007

The 2007 protest season in Belize was officially kicked off this week by two marches: one by the Belize National Teacher's Union, joined by upper division students; and the other by the labor unions, including the Belize Medical and Dental Union. One protest was over violent crime and the other white collar crime.

The rains held up and the "cold front" provided beautiful weather for protesters to take to the streets.

The youthful march on Friday, February 16, included the participation of 26 schools and the children were passionate in their pleas for an end to street and domestic violence. Media house garnered poignant interviews with them for both the tv and radio. Although the children were chosen at random, almost all had personal horror stories to tell; many had lost loved ones, including



Belizean labour unions joined the health workers in protest against GOB's health policies on Saturday, Feb 17.



All the Belize city primary schools and several high schools turned out in a protest against crime on Friday, Feb 16.

PNP announces "A New Path for Belize"

New Generation of Leaders Unveil Vision For The Nation: Fighting Corruption And Promoting Sustainable Economic Development Are Central Themes
San Antonio Village, Toledo—

Belize has a new political party, one that is made up of young Belizean leaders from across the country who are motivated, ambitious and determined not only to win seats in government in the next election but also to transform government as soon as they get there. The PNP will support candidates in all con-



PNP's Wil Maheia

stituencies. Wil Maheia, well known founder of the Toledo Institute For Development and the Environment will run for Area Representative of Toledo East. Dionicio Choc, a farmer and businessman will run for Area Representative of Toledo West.

"Today we move one step closer to providing Belize's citizens with the leadership we all deserve and to providing southern Belize with the assurance that it will not be left behind," said Wil Maheia candidate for Toledo East Area (Please Turn To Page 15)

mothers, fathers, friends and siblings to violent death.

On Saturday, it was the BMDU, the Trade Union Congress (which also includes the umbrella Belize National Teacher's Union), the Association for Concerned Belizeans, Sedi Elrington's Pickstock Division Committee, the St. (Please Turn To Page 3)

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Editorial Director

Meb Cutlack

Editor

Karla Heusner Vernon

General Manager

Trevor Vernon

Design/Layout

William G. Ysaguirre

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Email:

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Toledo Maya Cultural Council Seeks Support from Rigoberta Menchu Tum

Dear Editor,

On the 10th of February 2007, at 8:00 a.m., the newly elected board of the Toledo Maya Cultural Council, 16 women and men, met in Punta Gorda Town to hold their first Executive meeting.

At this meeting a recent article published in The INdependent Reformer Newspaper January 19, 2007, titled "Adjacency and Zoning issues" by Trevor Vernon was read. The article stated that the previous attempts to reach a settlement to the Guatemalan claim "were a massive disappointment and yet another costly failure, the vision whatever it is, is unclear to the rest of us."

The article went on to recommend that Senora Rigoberta Manchu Tum be part of the facilitation team. Stating that the area on both sides of the border was inhabited mostly by Guatemalans and Belizeans of Maya ancestry, and so it would be more culturally sensitive, and just for a legitimate indigenous leader of Rigoberta Manchu Tum stature to be involved. The board endorsed this suggestion, and composed a letter to her asking that she help them to get recognition and support for the proposed Toledo

People's Eco park plan, that they believe will help to insure that the potential negative effects of the new Guatemalan link road will be lessened and that benefits for the local people maximized. After all members signed this document, the Maya spiritual leader Jose Sho for The Maya Cultural Council burned co-

pal incense, the members joined hands knelt down, prayed to the four corners and towards the rising sun, asking that it reach Senora Rigoberta Manchu Tum, and finds her well and that she will be able to help them.

Signed, Punta Gorda correspondent

Readers support VIP

Dear Editor,

I thought this issue (February 9, 2007) was quite good. Really liked the balance this time with Said Musa's article on education. I liked the forward look-

ing thrust of some of the stuff, the future direction we must go and so forth. Cutlack's article gave food for thought. Didn't even know the VIP had a manifesto out with so many political reform promises? Do they have National representation for ALL seats yet? If so, like Meb I would be likely to vote for the VIP then. At least they are offering solutions! Is the VIP manifesto online? I would think that WTP candidates would join with VIP? Is that in the works? If so, they better hurry.

Signed, Ray Auxillou

Guadalupe High wins Poetry Contest

Danielle Hall from Our Lady of Guadalupe High School with the poem "Kayleigh's Story" won first place in a Belmopan Secondary Schools Poetry Competition at the George Price Centre for Peace and Development on Friday, February 16.

Valcia McGann, also from Our Lady of Guadalupe High School, was runner up with "Serious Times". Kaylin Fuller with "Education" and Shantina Jones with her poem "Life is Hard", both students of Belmopan Comprehensive School, tied for third place.

The contest was a collaborative effort between the National 4-H Youth Development Center under the Youth for the Future Initiative and Mr. Devon Jones of Youth on the Move.

Eighteen students from the Belmopan Comprehensive School, Belmopan Baptist High School, Belize Christian Academy, Our lady of Guadalupe High School and Western Christian Academy competed for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places prizes. The judges included Mr. Erwin X, Belize's Poet of the Year.



The National 4-H Council, PACT, Win Belize and the Ministry of Health sponsored the event.

The George Price Centre for Peace and Development congratulates all the contestants for their formidable efforts and commended the National 4-H Youth Development Centre for this great initiative.

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Belize – Guatemala talks stalled

Among four points in the maritime areas dispute, not even the exclusive zone of each nation has yet been defined.

Almost a year after efforts began to find a definitive solution to Guatemala's territorial claim to Belize, talks remain stalled.

April of this year will make 12 months since the technical meetings on the maritime areas began, including Honduras' participation. Yet no agreement has been reached on the first of four points in which the nation's rights to the sea were divided.

Discussions have centered on the determination of the exclusive economic zone of each country, according to international law.

"We are still on the first of the four points", confirmed Captain Randolph Chacón of the Guatemala negotiating team.

"The technical meetings were sus-



Belize's negotiator Assad Shoman listens as Guatemalan Foreign Minister Jorge Briz makes a point.

ended in the hope that the Organization of American States (OAS) concludes certain scientific consultations which may help to reconcile the proposals which have been made.

Pending issues

The adjacent zone and the base lines (to simplify by a straight line the coastlines which are irregular in general), should also be discussed to arrive at an agreement.

Once this first phase of talks is con-

cluded the OAS will recommend if the discussions should continue regarding the territorial claim or a buffer zone.

Regarding the latter, Guatemala claims 12,000 square kilometers almost half of Belizean territory.

"No meeting at the Foreign Ministers' level is on the program. Once the technical teams reach some agreement, then we Ministers will have to review those agreements", Honduran Foreign Minister Milton Jiménez commented.

Former Foreign Minister of Guatemala, Gabriel Orellana, said that these types of agreements take a lot of time. "It's a slow process. We are not discussing the merger of two banks or of a very large institution. These are topics with political and juridical connotations," he expounded.

Editor's note: story translated from a report in Siglo XXI of February 17, 2007.

The Heat is On - Protest Season 2007

(Continued From Page 1)
George's Caye Day Committee, Communication Workers, other citizens groups and a wide array of the citizenry in general. While not as massive as the 2005 protests, the showing was strong, particularly with representation from the BMDU, even though one third of its membership was working or on call at various hospitals around the country. A source told Independent Weekly the membership voted to honor their commitments to the people of Belize and remain at their posts, allowing those not on duty (or on call) to march in their stead.

Among the issues cited prior to Saturday's protest was 1) the government's taking over of the private debt of Universal Health Services costing taxpayers tens of millions of dollars, 2) the passage of the latest bond issue that is so hazy on details of costs incurred and 3) the firing of several BTL workers in a manner inconsistent with the collective bargaining agreement the Belize Telecommunications Workers Union has with management.

BTL has served government with notice of industrial action to commence this week if this dispute is not resolved.

Senator Godwin Hulse, guest speaker, indicated in his speech at the Memorial Park following the peaceful protest march that he will ask the Senate not to approve the national budget for 2007 unless an audit is done on the government books and there is a clear explanation of the conditions of the



This Grace Primary student believes in power of the mind.

bond. Two years ago, similar sentiments against the presentation of the budget resulted in a massive protest in front of the National Assembly in Belmopan during a budget presentation. The good senator issued a challenge to his fellow Senators and the Auditor General who is supposed to have guaranteed tenure of office by constitutional provisions, to stand for what is right.

Also in 2005, BTL workers staged a walkout and cut off telecommunications services for a few days during a labor

dispute and concerns over the management of the company.

With so many unions mobilizing once again, and now the children not merely having classes disrupted by protests but willingly participating, is Belize now beginning to have a protest season like India, Panama, Nicaragua, Italy, France and other countries we see on the news? International Law Enforcement agencies also cite the end of Ramadan as the start of yet another protest season against the West.

If so, it seems the season is upon us once more especially since the rains have subsided, the major crops harvested, Ramadan is over and The Government's budget is getting finishing touches before presentation to the house.



No violent confrontations; protestors even trusted police to guard their signs!



These schoolgirls want no blood, no crime and their love may make a change.

Fly Tropic Air - Fly Tropic Air - Fly Tropic Air

Fear Factor



By: Karla Heusner Vernon

I watched from the sidelines, taking photos, as they marched by. I used the excuse I was covering the demonstration for the paper.

They had no excuses: these men and women from the Medical and Dental Unionists, the BTL workers, teachers, Concerned Belizeans and assorted UDP's. They were chanting, carrying placards and joined in solidarity over the issues of the government taking on the Universal Health Services instead of giving much needed resuscitation to the Karl Heusner Memorial, the firing of three BTL employees for alleged theft, and the SUPER bond, the financial shackling of generations of Belizeans to pay for the looting of the

national treasury by a group of modern day carpetbaggers.

They were mostly professional people; I doubt they ever expected they'd leave their comfortable offices or predictable jobsites to become social and political activists. This was the sort of thing people did in other countries in the hemisphere: Mexico, Venezuela, Bolivia... Guatemala.

Hundreds of other ordinary citizens had lined the streets of Belize City to silently cheer them on. Afterwards, the speeches at Memorial Park, especially by Senator Godwin Hulse, gave us hope. He called for an end to the ruler-subject relationship Belize has inherited in the post-colonial era, for Belizeans to throw off the yoke of corruption and indebtedness we now find ourselves carrying when all we wanted was a change in government. He reminded the elected government officials who stood by, or worse, held us down during the gang rape, just who is paying their salaries—the People of Belize, not the political parties.

He was eloquent, fiery and emphatic. The crowd hung on his every word. You could not help but wonder if Belize has

finally found a charismatic leader to succeed George Price, Phillip Goldson, Antonio Soberanis.. If the pretenders to the throne could see the threat he poses.

Clearly he is not afraid. Nor will not be bullied.

Was he always this brave? Or was he as smiling and accommodating as the rest of us? Somewhere along the line, however, this man who was just going about his business decided to make Belize his business.

Finally, thousands of other Belizeans are doing this too. No longer content to merely suffer, or even complain, but to act.

Still, we berate ourselves. How did we let this happen? We should have seen it coming.... all the signs were there.

Yes, perhaps. But does a mother ever imagine her darling boy will grow up to become a killer? That the smiling politician shaking your hand is really the devil in disguise?


No, as good people we believe other people to be good as well. And as God fearing and law abiding as the rest of the community.

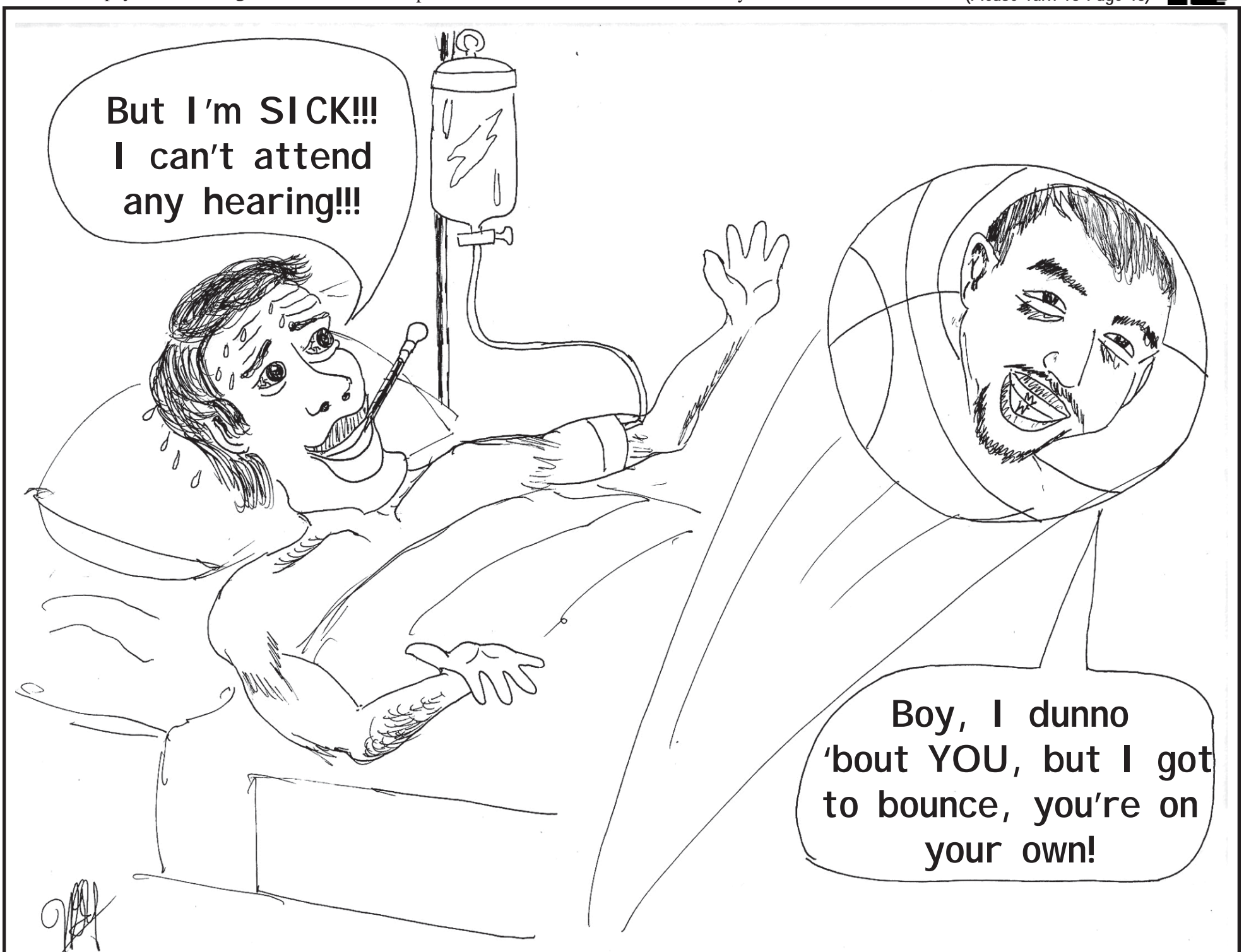
To share our own fear of being socially ostracized due to scandal, sent to jail for stealing, punished, if not by the law, then by God. To share our cosmic belief that what goes around, come around...

But they do not. The only difference between the people who love Belize and the people who abuse her is fear, or rather the absence of it.

Whether it is the criminal in the streets, or the ones in the capital, these Belizeans crossed the line the day they pulled off their first caper: murdered their first shopkeeper in broad daylight in front of a store full of customers, held up their first woman or child walking to school, made their first salary advance or loan to themselves and their friends.

Regardless of their color or status in this society, they share their sense of entitlement: "If you no di use it, da fi mi." Anything I see is mine because I say it is. I will take it, with a gun, or a signature on a bank draft or the creation of a "special vehicle," legal fees, transaction commissions.

As one of the more notorious said (Please Turn To Page 13) 



Sexy Policies... on the Sly



By: Trevor Vernon

Belize is home to some of the most attractive policy statements and accompanying documents the world has ever produced. Works of art, I tell you. Everything sparkles on paper: from development, tourism and health policies to energy, poverty alleviation, HIV/Aids reduction, universal education to gender equality.

We have to be proud of our Belizean men and women who stand up at conferences around the world to showcase and articulate Belize government's world class policy positions. Such bright and articulate people with advanced degrees, adorning seats behind "Belice" name plates.

What a joy it is to cruise the internet and see the face our government shows the outside world. I'll tell you a little secret... you can find one hell of an attractive website with wondrous philosophies put out by... bet you can't guess; the office of **good governance**! It's got to be the envy of envies on the world wide web.

You'd never know, viewing this from abroad, that like so many other government departments it's just a façade. That, the actual Office of Governance is the most Musa-esque farce ever written. They even hold nationwide consultations for the citizens but forget to invite the people. There is no indication from the website that the current board is composed of handpicked stooges to replace that last commission which resigned en masse because they recognized it for the sham it is.

Or is it? Perhaps the office of good governance does serve a purpose: the further eroding of the public service of Belize. But more on that in a minute. Back to sexy public policy.

Walking the streets of this country you have to wonder where our flashy policy positions went wrong. So many state-of-the-art projects for everything from computers and internet for the schools to satellite distance learning for rural communities. Poverty alleviation plans and save-the-children from hunger/child labor/sexual exploitation documents galore. Promotion of the agriculture sector, eco-tourism, "services sector", small businesses, young entrepreneurs, micro-enterprises, cashew and cassava production, etc, etc.

So why is there so much poverty in both rural and urban areas, north & southside, east and westside? Why is

there no gender equality in Cabinet? What happened to the balanced growth cruise ship policy the task force spent months developing? Where are all the new telemarketing and call center centers? The fish farming and animal husbandry programs?

Have they all been tossed onto the garbage heap? Burned with the plastics and condoms from the cruise ships?

The government proudly tells the cyber world we are among the few growing economies, yet, everywhere you go in the "real" Belize you are of-

fered "parallel market" fuels, cigarettes, liquor, stolen shrimp and undersized lobster, and out of season delicacies. It forces you to ask: why is the underground economy growing so rapidly? If the economy is booming and Belize is such a good country, why are so many good people resorting to underhanded activities?

It seems this good country has been good only to convenient corporate citizens and other robber baron raiders who pillage at will, driving up the cost of living for those who were born here

or cannot leave. We pay more now for virtually everything we consume: phone, water, light, gas, butane, medicines, school books. The draconian GST that seems to hit the poor, the non-GST registered.

There is a major disconnect between what Belize tells the world it stands for, and what people have to stand for to live here.

I have a strong suspicion the divide has a lot to do with the dumbing down of the civil service. Civil Servants were once a fiercely proud lot, hell bend on protecting the service and what it stood for. Then their legs were kicked out from under them with the disbanding of the civil service commission, and the re-naming of the government department responsible for the proper functioning of the service. You guessed it again—

(Please Turn To Page 10)

You'd never know, viewing this from abroad, that like so many other government departments, it's just a façade.

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Man's Inhumanity Against Woman

By **Renee Hylander**

“Just get out!” This is the cry heard from many sectors of society when it comes to discussing women who are in abusive relationships. But it really isn’t as simple as just packing one’s bags, one’s kids, and moving on. There are nearly as many reasons why women stay in abusive relationships as there are myths surrounding these sometimes lethal situations. Some of these reasons are inability to recognize the behavior as abusive, seemingly insurmountable financial constraints, lack of outside support, and shame that results in many women feeling that they are not worth protecting.

In order to decide to leave a relationship with domestic or gender-based violence, a woman first has to recognize that the relationship is not in her best interest. While severe physical abuse that leaves visible signs such as bruises, black eyes, lost teeth, and broken bones may be hard to deny, other types of violence are more insidious. A young woman told me that she did not consider the pushing and occasional slaps from her husband as being abusive because she had witnessed much worse behavior being inflicted upon female relatives while she was growing up. Of course I informed her that any physical contact inflicted in anger that causes pain to the receiver is indeed physical abuse.

Another physically intrusive behavior that is rarely seen as abuse is marital/partner rape and sexual abuse. Many people believe that a woman cannot be raped by her husband or a man with whom she has previously engaged in sexual intercourse. Nothing could be further from the truth. Each of us has the right to decide when and how to engage in sexual contact, whether we are married or not. Any person who violates another’s wishes in this arena is guilty of rape.

Other forms of domestic violence are even less obvious. Emotional abuse ranks as one of the most common forms of abuse and also one of the hardest to escape. This involves name calling, shaming, threatening, and controlling behaviors. Many relationships begin with hints of emotional abuse that escalates over time and in many cases leads to physical abuse.

Some common tactics of emotional abuse are making the woman think she is crazy, humiliating her, making her feel guilty, forcing isolation, blaming her for his abusive behavior, using coercion and threats, using intimidation, preventing her from getting or keeping a job, treating her like a servant, making all the major decisions without consulting her, using the children or threatening to take them away. Preventing her from holding employment outside the home of-

ten leads to economic abuse where the man makes all the money and also controls how it is spent.

Many times women are the victims of more than one type of violence from their partners. One commonality among all of the forms of violence is that the abuser uses these methods to maintain power and control in the relationship.

Once a woman is able to recognize and admit that her partner’s treatment is abusive, she needs to be able to have the means to escape. Since some men

receive a maximum of \$200.00 per week or \$800.00 per month. Since this is the maximum, the court may order less.

Men also may refuse to pay maintenance in a timely fashion. Even if all went without a hitch, a woman may find it difficult to maintain a separate home, utilities, food, toiletries, school fees, etc., on this amount. Realistically, we also must not forget about the women who are not married to their abusers and who may have children that are not those of

visement focuses on working out problems rather than referring people for professional violence counseling. Some religions even bar divorced or separated members from participating in sacraments and other rituals. This can be devastating for women, many for whom church involvement is very important.

There also seems to be a need for improvements to our public institutions that should be supporting women. At this point the only safe house in Belize is Haven House in Belize City. Women in the districts have to find transportation or rely on the limited funding of the Women’s Department offices to assist them in getting to Haven House. Haven House and the Women’s Department are indeed doing a great service with limited budgets to house and provide support to these women and their children, but it is only a temporary solution.

There are fees for protection and separation orders and the Family Court environments are still not as confidential as they should be. While the actual proceedings are treated confidentially, we still have a small enough population that a woman with a black eye coming in and out of courtrooms and offices is recognized by community members, some of whom report the information back to the perpetrator.

In a discussion during a Critical Thinking and Writing class, one of my students informed me that some police officers, when called out on domestic disturbances, tell the victims to the effect that “it’s useless to take your report since you will just drop the charges later.” At a recent meeting of the Orange Walk District Gender-Based Violence Committee, a discussion ensued about police officers being notified by concerned

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One commonality among all of the forms of violence is that the abuser uses these methods to maintain power and control in the relationship.

use economic control over women, it is difficult for the women to save enough money to escape the situation and be able to provide for herself and her children.

Even when women work outside the home and earn a salary, some abusers take the women’s paychecks and make the women ask them for money. Usually in these situations the women also have to provide the men with details about where and how the money was spent.

In 2005, Deputy Chief Statistician, Elizabeth Talbert reported that 72% of women in the working age population are not in the labor force. (Williams, 2005, para 3) If a woman is legally married to her abuser, she may apply for legal separation. If granted legal separation, the woman is entitled to up to \$50.00 per week, per child. She can also received spousal maintenance of up to \$100.00 per week. So in the case of a married woman who has two children fathered by the abuser, she could

their abuser. Financial considerations are not the only factors that keep women trapped in abusive situations.

Even if finances are not a problem, many women lack the emotional support needed in order to successfully abandon a gender-based violence situation. Frequently women who end up in violent households also grew up in them. These women may not feel that they can get support from their own female relatives because their sisters, mothers, aunts and grandmothers are also experiencing abusive situations.

Many are the family members and friends that tell women that “you made your bed, now lie in it.” Some friends and family refuse to talk with their loved ones about it because they feel that problems in the relationship should stay between the couple.

Some of our religious leaders are no better. Many sects believe that marriage is “‘til death do us part.” This mentality might indeed bring that death in shorter time. At times religious ad-

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Man's Inhumanity Against Woman

☛ (Continued From Page 6)

citizens that domestic violence was occurring in a neighborhood, but the police just drove through the neighborhood and when they did not see anyone in the yard flagging them down, they left the area without checking any of the houses. This is disturbing because if a woman calls the police herself, she may not be able to come out of the house. If a neighbor calls, he/she may be afraid that they abuser will turn his violence upon the reporter's family and it is easy to see this point as the abuser is currently enacting violence on a person he claims to love.

Although there are many women who lack outside support, there are others who have supportive friends and family if only they could make the move and admit their abusive situations.

It can be confusing for those who have never personally experienced domestic violence to wonder why women would keep their abuse a secret, but many do just that. One reason that I have personal experience with is shame. It is never easy to admit that the man that should be a lover and life partner is abusive. Society still sees women as the caretakers of relationships, so when a relationship fails or the men turn out to be different than they appeared to be in the beginning, women are often blamed for not being enough. They are

blamed for not being attractive enough, sexually interesting enough, tidy enough, understanding enough, or smart enough. The media share some of this blame in the way that domestic violence stories are covered. If it's gory and sensational, especially if it involves a death, the story is right there on the front page. If she lives, for the most part, the story is regulated to an inside page. Some editorials even use victims names and insinuate that they will continue to be victims or that they are stupid. Intelligence has nothing to do with being a victim of a crime.

Outside influences are not the only ones that count when speaking of shame. Often women who have been victimized in their own homes do not need society to shame them because they have their abusers and eventually, they also have their own internal voices. If a person hears that she is dumb, ugly, useless, and unlovable on a daily basis, she will begin to believe it herself. Couple that with the fact that many women who end up in abusive relationships had low self-esteem to begin with and one can see how stifling shame can be. This is equally true for women with little education as it is for the very educated. Getting women to feel that they are truly worth protecting is a very daunting challenge.

So with what authority do I speak about this issue? I received a

Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and completed all coursework (with straight A's) for a Master's Degree in Marriage and Family Therapy. I worked for over 12 years as a social worker in the U.S.A. I have been teaching self-defense to women in Belize since 2002 and have worked with over 200 women in private classes, through Women's Department programs, with Youth Enhancement Services, and at Muffles Junior College, where I am also an English instructor. I am also a member of the Orange Walk District Gender-Based Violence Committee.

But there is one final qualification that in the past I might have been tempted to leave out: I was involved in an emotionally abusive relationship for 13 years. Four of those years I was married to the man who made me feel less than human. His emotional violence finally did culminate in physical violence, the most severe of which involved being stuck over the head with a cast iron frying pan.

So for many years I advised women to leave abusive relationships, assisted them with obtaining police protection and legal help and generally supported their actions to get out of abusive situations. Why didn't I get out of my situation sooner? I was ashamed. I refuse to be silent any longer and I am inspired by the women who told their stories in the documentary, *Domestic Violence: The Belizean Reality*, made by the Women's Department last year. We women who have survived need to come forward and speak up for ourselves. We need to realize that they only person responsible for abuse is the abuser and that people that might blame us or look down upon us are not the kind of people we need in our lives anyway. There is a whole sisterhood of us here to support one another.

Taking steps to end domestic violence can seem like a mountain of troubles to climb, but we have to remember that every successful trip to the summit starts with a few small steps.

If you think you are a victim of domestic violence, talk to someone you trust about the situation. If you don't know anyone you can talk to or you feel ashamed to speak with friends and family, contact the Women's Department. They can provide answers to your questions, support and direction. I would also recommend an excellent book that you may obtain for free from the Women's Department: *Domestic Violence Women's Handbook*. I have used some of the book's information in this article. It provides more details about types of abuse and the legal and other options that women have in Belize.

If you know someone who is currently in an unsafe situation, you can offer non-judgmental support. Don't tell her that her man is bad; tell her that no woman deserves to be called names, hit, beaten, or raped. Offer to drive her to the police station, take her to the Women's Department, attend court with her, or watch her children while she goes to work or interviews for a job. Join efforts by non-governmental and governmental agencies to combat gender violence. Lobby for more money in the government's budget to support the work of agencies that work with women and children. International Women's Week begins March 3rd under the theme *Women and Men United to End Violence Against Women*. Plan to participate in at least one event. Fight for specialized sensitivity training of our police officers and for judges to impose stronger punishments for perpetrators of gender-based violence. Call Haven House and ask what kinds of donations the agency could use. Take a self-defense course if one is available in your community.

Raise your children using non-violent forms of discipline and teach them how to resolve conflicts peacefully. Change attitudes towards the families that experience this kind of violence and change lives. And pray that maybe one day we can learn to live in peace.

Positive response to Independent article on education in Belize

Ministry of Education raises concern about Primary School children sent home for not paying fees.

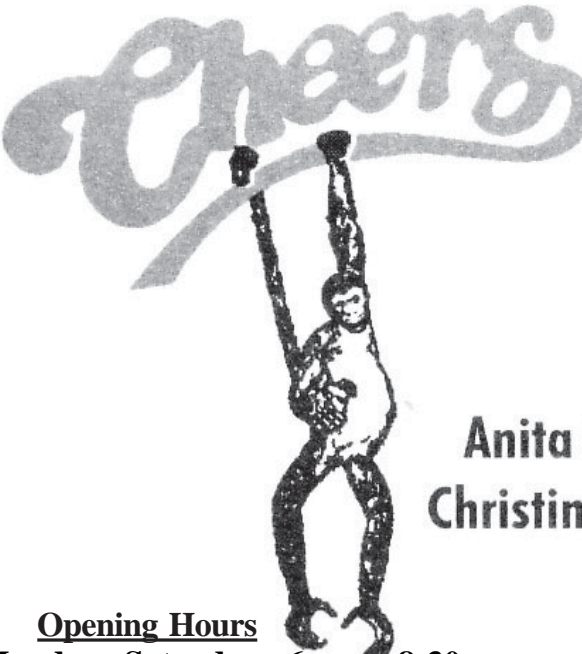
A release from the Ministry of Education states the Ministry is alarmed

And concerned at the increasing number of cases of primary school students being sent home or denied access to their education as a result of inability to pay fees levied by primary schools. The Ministry says it wishes to remind General Managers and Principals that under the education rules no Ministry of Education or Government aided Primary School should prohibit attendance at school of a child of compulsory school age because of inability to pay school fees and such child shall not be subject to discrimination by the school.

On the matter of fees increase the Ministry reminds managing authorities that the Chief Education Officer or the Minister as the case may be should be informed of and give approval to any proposal to increase fees at least one full year before any such increase is to

take place. The Ministry says it calls on all parties to ensure the continued access to education of all our primary school children.

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Anita Tupper
Christine Tupper

Your weekly

HOROSCOPE

ARIES (Mar. 21- April 20)

Your questions will help you ferret out secret information. You don't owe anyone an explanation. Do your own thing, you need time to yourself. Make any necessary changes to your insurance policy. Rely on the one you love for support and affection. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

TAURUS (Apr. 21- May 21)

Get involved in activities that will bring you knowledge about foreign land, philosophies, or cultures. Don't be too quick to respond to a plea for help. Your concern with older family members and those less fortunate than yourself will only add to your attractiveness. You can't make things better if you don't know what to fix. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21)

You can meet a new romantic partner or secure the love connection you already have by going out and entertaining yourself. You will get out of shape easily if you don't keep on top of things. Be careful while traveling. You will have excellent ideas and you should be able to help your partner get ahead. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Stomach problems could prevail if you haven't been watching your diet. Children's needs could be more costly than you anticipated. If you put your mind to it, you could entertain or host a multitude of social events. Don't make large purchases unless you have discussed your choices with your mate.

Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

LEO (July 23-Aug 22)

Overindulgence will mean poor health. Money may slip through your fingers. Emotional upset may prevail on the domestic scene if you have neglected your duties or your mate. You may want to sign up for courses that will encourage you to have more confidence in yourself. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 -Sept. 23)

Your charm will attract members of the opposite sex. Involvement in financial schemes will be followed by losses. Take time to find out all you can. Your compassion will be appreciated more than you can imagine. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 - Oct. 23)

In-laws may cause difficulties. Travel should be considered. Try to ease any disappointment by making amends. Your home environment may be volatile if precautions aren't taken. Major job changes or opportunities to get ahead professionally are apparent. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)

Be tolerant, but don't let any one take you for granted. A romantic dinner, followed by a quiet evening with the one who is enticing you, should be most satisfying. Property deals will pay big dividends. You will be erratic and quite likely to make personal mistakes. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

Totally

Teens



It's better to keep your mouth shut and give the impression that you're stupid than to open it and remove all doubt.

Someday your prince charming will come. Mine just took a wrong turn, got lost, and is too stubborn to ask for directions.

Don't play stupid with me ... I'm better at it.

Roses are red violets are blue, God made me pretty, what happened to you?

'Tis far better to- be pissed off than to bepiss-ed on.

I don't need your attitude, I have one of my own

"I do exercise. I do one sit up everyday ... when I get out of bed in the morning."

Gone crazy ... Be back soon ...

"FAT FREE" means eat the whole bag.

mooooo .. mooooo ... im a chicken

Love your enemies ... they hate it

"It's not lost. I just can't find it."

i don't have a short attention span i just oooooooooooooo! ! !
.....a KITTY! ! !

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 -Dec. 21)

You've been hurt before and could be again if you don't play hard to get. Disputes on the home front may be hard to avoid. Spend a quiet day with the one you love. Equilibrium in your romantic life is likely if you treat your partner well. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22.- Jan. 20)

Get involved in volunteer work that will bring you satisfaction, not an empty wallet. Catch up on your reading and correspondence. Your dramatic nature may be too much to handle. You're eager to learn. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 -Feb. 19)

Don't let your personal problems interfere with your professional re-

sponsibilities. You won't be able to keep a secret. Trips will be enjoyable, and communication with your lover will clear up any misconceptions. You may be overly emotional when dealing with your mate. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

PISCES (Feb. 20-Mar. 20)

Get involved in activities that will bring you knowledge about foreign land, philosophies, or cultures. Your partner could make you angry if they steal your thunder or embarrass you in front of others. Traffic will be busier than you anticipated, so try to get a head start if you have made plans to travel. Avoid lending money or belongings to friends. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.



THE

hunt

FOR

GOOD FOOD

with Anthony Hunt

MANATEE LOOKOUT

8.5 Miles Northern Highway • Ladyville



I have passed by Manatee Lookout so many times on my drives back and forth from Ladyville, that I have never given the place much thought. Although I have always seen more than a few vehicles there, my travels have never included a pit stop halfway to town. Well, this time it did and it was worth it. Though we couldn't enjoy the patio because of the "no see ums", and the air conditioned smoky ambience was a little too much for us non smoker types, the food was excellent, and the beer cold. We sampled the vegetarian platter, the kibby with humus and the chicken strips (for the kids). All were presented nicely and with efficient service. All the patrons (mostly "Ladyvillarians") all seemed to be enjoying themselves, whether they were eating, drinking, or waiting for the wives to get off of work. Next time we plan to go for lunch to enjoy the riverside and if this reviewer is going back, it has to be good!

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Join the new Belizean Green Party

**By: INdependent Weekly
P.G. Correspondent**

The INdependent Reformer Newspaper has offered an opportunity for anyone contemplating the creation of a political party in Belize, a forum, to put forth their platform.

All over the world people have been united by a common set of 10 principles, to form Green Parties. We were surprised to learn that while there are three national Green Parties in Central America, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Guatemala, Belize was not one of them. With this article come the 10 basic principles that form the core of the International Green Party, some ideas of what a Belizean Green Party could offer, and an invitation to all Belizean citizens who might be interested in joining one.

Ten Key Values of the Belizean Green Party

1. **Grassroots Democracy**
2. **Social justice and Equal Opportunity**
3. **Ecological Wisdom**
4. **Non-Violence**
5. **Decentralization**
6. **Community Based Economics and Economic Justice**
7. **Feminism and Gender Equity**
8. **Respect for Diversity**
9. **Personal and Global Responsibility**
10. **Future focus and Sustainability**

To get it started, we have formed a Toledo Branch with the further development of the Toledo People's Eco Park Plan as our platform. We would like to see if there are other Belizeans

who would like to form District branches with their development plans based on the 10 basic principles for their districts. We also welcome all International Green Party members who might want to help us with ideas, financial contributions, or volunteer services. We feel our Toledo Branch Green Party has developed some very good ideas, one being the requirement that for a motion to pass it must have at least 80% of the group's vote. If a motion has less than 80%, the group must continue to debate the issue until they reach at least 80%. Another good idea is that we have 100 percent gender equality. Meaning we have a female and male representative for each official office. Another is the requirement of an active youth group with gender equality.

We hope there will be enough Belizeans out there to respond to this call, to make the establishment of a Belizean Green Party a reality and that there will be enough International Green Party members with a global perspective to help us. Anyone interested in developing a dialogue please e-mail belizeangreenpartytoledo@hotmail.com, or write to Belizean Green Party, Box 75, Punta Gorda, Belize Central America.

At the present time we have formed a pro tem group, if and when we reach 300 serious members, we will open nominations for our districts representatives and we will hold an election. If the party continues to grow, we will try and enter the national elections for our district representatives.

Answering The Challenge:

"A challenge: where do the inde-

pendents stand?" by Meb Cuttack, offers a challenge to all prospective independent candidates throughout Belize to present yourselves and your ideas to the public, January 12, 2007. The challenge goes on to ask for your views on the following.

(a) An elected Senate or alternative. We believe in an elected Senate as necessary for a balance in the government as it is practiced in the USA

(b) Land Reform, we believe no more of the public land should be sold or leased to individuals. Private land should be left alone, to be sold as the owner wishes. What's left of the public land should be used for community-based projects and programs for those Belizean citizens who are not now land owners. If they want to own private land, let them work in cooperation, to make and save what they earned by sustainably using the public's land. Then buy a piece of private land.

Hopefully the government can purchase some of the larger tracts of land owned by absentee landowners and have them subdivided into thousands of smaller parcels and lots for those who want to have small farms and house lots. This way all our citizens will always have a place to work and earn. Otherwise as our population grows, eventually there will be no good land left and if history is an indicator of what will happen eventually a few wealthy and powerful families and corporations will own 90% + of the land.

(c) General revenue, the income from taxes should be earmarked for specific needs, the ministers must ac-

complish their responsibilities with the budget designed according to their specific source of revenue.

(d) A new Integrity Commission, to which all Ministers, Senators, and House Members must submit all details of their financial and property holdings prior to elections, and during their time in office.

(e) Review, of all recent environmental impact assessments related to mega and smaller projects. And enforcement of laws requiring them for future projects. What has gone wrong in Belize with Independence with regard to the following. The problem began before Independence, essentially education should be relevant and appropriate, meaning it should help local people to use the natural and other resources around them in sustainable ways, and how to share the work and benefits in fair ways. How to spend the money they earn on quality food for a better diet, and how to live in a more healthy way, to prevent the majority of the illness and problems our society suffers, mainly due to our poor lifestyle.

(f) Poverty alleviation, using systems thinking, people power, and holistic eco planning with the appropriate education. Also monitor the operation of the non-governmental projects and programs were so much of the foreign aid is presently misused. Holistic planning provides ways and means for all stakeholders, private business sector, government, non-governmental organizations, funders, and the local community based organizations to work together more effectively and efficiently.

Guatemalans already registering to vote - in Belize

By: Meb Cutlack

The first snowslide, the traditional avalanche of Guatemalans illegally registering to vote in Belize's next elections, has already taken place in Cayo. According to The Star newspaper this week, groups from nearby Melchor de Mencos, Guatemala started arriving last week.

The Star: "We know that election is near when we begin to see immigrants, especially from the neighbouring Central American countries, assembling in unusually large numbers, at public offices as they seek legal documentation to apply for nationality which might be approved in time to get them on the official voters list, thereby enabling them to exercise the right to vote."

And The Star goes on: "This appeared to be the case this past Tuesday when no less than 20 such immigrants were crowded in the San Ignacio police station

all applying for a police record which is one of the official documents required in the process of applying for Belizeans nationality."

There is nothing, as The Star suggests, wrong in their registering EXCEPT in this case: "They came in two vehicles bearing government plates!"

The Star: "There is nothing wrong with Central American neighbours seeking to become naturalized Belizeans especially when they meet the mandatory requirements of 5 years continued residency in Belize. The situation becomes worrisome, however, amidst reports of foreigners coming straight across the border, mainly from neighbouring Melchor, Guatemala, giving an address in Belize, usually in one of the villages, then commencing the process of applying for nationality and immediately returning to their usual place of abode across the border,

After the last election in 2003 I offered

the DPP, Kirk Anderson, evidence of almost 200 aliens who had voted illegally in the election. I broke my accusation down to 40 provable cases whom villagers alleged did not belong to their villages and I also offered the names of 8, who had all registered as living at the same vacant lot, address in San Ignacio.

Three months later The DPP informed me that my charges had been 'investigated' by the San Ignacio police and were not true. I had offered to take the police to the fraudulent vacant lot and also provide them with the real addresses of the 8 in Melchor. My help was refused!

What happens each year in Cayo also happens in the South and North of Belize before every election. It means that it is quite probable that thousands of illegal immigrants vote every year in our elections and can actually change the outcome of an election in Belize. A country which Guatemala maintains a claim!

Before the last election one PUP minister was witnessed registering Guatemalan and Honduran fishermen right on the beach at Monkey River. A policeman stood by to protect the Minister and stop the angry Monkey River residents from interfering!

Unless we are prepared to accept the idea that our elections can be determined by groups from Guatemala and Honduras then we must truthfully investigate all accusation's of electoral fraud and prosecute when necessary. Perhaps the time has come for some international monitoring of Belizean elections.

It is a sign of how real the situation has already become if illegal immigrants are in fact, as alleged, being delivered directly to police stations in government vehicles.

It is also a signal of just how contemptuous government is of what Belizeans might feel about their country being sold out to Guatemala in this manner.

Sexy Policies, ...

➡ (Continued From Page 5)
the Office of Good Governance.

In the US, the Wendy's hamburger chain used to run a television commercial where a senior citizen asks the competitor: "Where is the beef?" In this administration there is a lot of hype but no beef. Hell, there isn't even "lee saal poke".

Where is the beef indeed... some say the finest cuts were exported offshore to Montevideo, and Panama, and Miami, and Cayman. Time will tell.

The solution to really getting good governance is to go back to previous proven practices. To resurrect a civil service that was founded, and run, on the principles of a meritocracy, not crony-ocracy.

We need to re-instate a civil service the incoming elected politicians are forced to respect, which stands guard over the treasury and watches over the activities of those elected to serve the people.

As it now stands, with this toothless office of governance, civil servants are disposable, temporary – even seasonal – workers dependant on which of the two major parties is in office. This travesty, dear reader, provides the prime enabling environment for the party hacks and cronies to raid our treasury... for unscrupulous ministers to give away land, loans and grants to family, friends, sweethearts and their children.

They behave as if the members of the public service are their private servants, to do as they are told and cover their misdeeds, take the fall for them in court or during commissions of enquiry.

We must insist that all political aspirants wishing to contest the upcoming general elections state their position on the issue of a temporal civil service (along with other crucial declarations). Insist that they commit to stamping out corruption and all the supporting factors that allow people to cheat our government's treasury of its revenues. (And not necessarily because we want more resources in the hands of the kleptomaniacs.)

This existing civil service environment does not motivate the service membership to focus on the execution of proper policy, but forces them into the constant appeasement of the ministerial ego, which as we all know can get quite self absorbed and removed from reality. Until this happens, all we will get is survivalists, heads of departments, legal advisors and CEOs at fancy conferences with flashy pamphlets on sexy policies that never get implemented.

If you think I exaggerate, just check out the many links on the Government of Belize website. You may be surprised to see what is "out there," instead of being done here.

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Inspired Insights

Loneliness in the Midst of Development



By: Rev'd LeRoy Flowers

More and more we find that people are lonely while we make economic and technological developments. Recently it was noted that Korean teenagers make approximately 100 cell calls a day. Social scientists are beginning to correlate high cell phone usage with rising rates of depression. Second, a Knight-rider news service study noted that Americans are report-

ing fewer close friends. The average person now has only two close friends, while a number of people said they had no one to discuss important matters with. Only recently social scientists noted their concern of (SAD) (Seasonal Affective Disorder); when the lack of sunlight causes depression to increase in many people. And then to find out that high cell phone usage produces depression...what a fix we find ourselves in, as a modern educated people! Many people are constantly connected to others: cell phone, I-Pod, email, computer, laptop, beepers, etc; yet have few, if any, close friends and real friendships. It's a world where you hear people talking on cell phones even in the churches and restrooms, or teens' text- messaging over 2500 messages a month, where people appear connected but in reality are lonely. The Gospel of Christ has much to say

to us and to this cold lonely world: "Come unto me all who are weary, and I will give you rest." "Listen to my Voice, like sheep hear their shepherd, and I will lead you. You are my friends if you do what I command you." Keith Cartheright, the Caribbean theologian, reminds us that we have the best name: "Friends of Jesus." He noted that the Gospel message speaks even more powerful today, than it did when first spoken by our Lord. So many lonely people. Materially, the society is better off... (homes-education-vehicles-etc.), yet there are so many immature educated wealthy lonely individuals in our society and in general. Many individuals have no caring relationships with family members (brothers, sisters, parents, aunts, uncles and in-laws) much less close friends. They trust no one... They are afraid of loving and caring for anyone, not even themselves. This is a horrible situation and sad indeed. It is the ground work for gangs, drugs, abuse, alcohol, domestic violence, gambling and the general mistrust in the wider community. The Christian Community needs to share the message of hope and love ... Christ is present- and in community of hope and love for all God's children. For in the midst of loneliness, you are never alone. In the frantic pace of staying connected, you are always connected to God and those who love you.

The Faith Community must provide more opportunities for face-to-face contact with others, opportunities for meaningful relationships to grow and develop. This must be done by accepting all as equals and with respect; listening respectfully to different points of view, even when we disagree. Position, authority and power, status and money should never be the role for the genuine relationships and friendships. Sadly many in the society are aloof from family and friends due to their status, education and position. We need to help transform a lonely crew into a crowd of friends and witnesses, a people of faith who are reaching out to others and sharing the presence of God. Let us learn to accept ourselves. Stop being afraid! Yes, all of us are vulnerable. This is life. But it is better to vulnerable than to be lonely. Let us be more intentional about developing personal relationships, built on mutual respect, thus encouraging community building. Real community happens face-to face with God and with each other. Plan deliberately today to be truly connected with family members and friends...this is the best means of friendship, stop hiding behind the email, and cell phone!! Stop! Listen to a friend! Have lunch with a brother/sister. What a wonderful way to break the state of loneliness today.

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TAKE A BREAK



**By Meb Cutlack
& Trevor Vernon**

Tired of Belize City and want to get away for just a day or so?
Do what we did, make a trip, part business and part pleasure, to Caye Caulker and San Pedro —all in 24 hours! It might sound hurried but, in fact it is a leisured break and not more expensive than a night on the town in Belize City.

Here’s how! Break off from work an hour or two early and catch the 3.30 or 4.30 Tropic flight to Caye Caulker. Stay overnight on the Caye, where the choice of hotels ranges from the very ‘cheap’ to the ‘moderate’ to up the ‘top of the market’ - and even that’s not expensive!
You can get rooms at the Tropical Paradise and Maria Vega’s and others from about \$30 to \$35 U.S and (at the top of the market) a room at Iguana Reef

for \$113 U.S. And that rate includes the best continental breakfast we’ve seen anywhere. They have a great ocean-view dining area with a pool and in the pipeline... all in a really classy atmosphere. Dinner options are endless on Caye Caulker but we had a truly spectacular Italian experience at Don Corleone Trattoria. They make their own pastas in house and serve some of the best reds we’ve had in a long time. Truly Exquisite.

The next day you have the choice of a 9.30 Tropic flight or a later boat taxi (\$10Bz) to San Pedro. You have an option of Triple J (Rainbow Pier) or the Water Taxi Association (main pier).
Lunch in San Pedro can be as much as an event as a meal and then you can take a quick flight back to Belize City - pretty well every hour, on the hour, in the afternoon. We recommend flying Tropic!
Try it!

The Belize Zoo says : Big thumbs Down on Maruba Lodge

By Sharon Matola

It is unfortunate that the Maruba Lodge continues to exploit Belizean wildlife for the sole purpose of their own financial gain.
Maruba openly admits and boasts (<http://www.mojohd.com/shows/threesheets/photos/>) that they place live snakes and scorpions into bottles of rum.
These animals die and become “wild-life curios” aimed to be sold to the guests at the Maruba “eco lodge”.
Just the week, the Zoo got another email from an American family who visited Belize and were shocked to find this beverage on sale at Maruba.
This practice violates the Wildlife Protection Act of 1981 which clearly states that it is “illegal to collect and sell species of wildlife”
Furthermore, Maruba employees are known to pay nearby villagers for the collecting of snakes - any species of snake, for their illegal tourist-targeted rum enterprise.
The ecological role which snakes and



Maruba Resort promotes their Viper and Stinger Rums with this image on their website
Maruba’s other “viper rum victims”, scorpions, play in the Belizean environment matters zero to Maruba Lodge.
What does matter to Maruba is that they undertake a perverse activity and create their own illegal tourist side-show, purely to try and attract some

pritate legal reprimand.
When The Belize Zoo inquired as to what the final outcome was, it was indicated that a high-ranking government official dismissed the charges against the Maruba Lodge. Justice prevailing? Hardly. Political favour?
The Maruba Lodge continues to disregard the laws of Belize. They show no respect for the efforts being made by many here, aimed at conserving, not degrading this nation’s natural resources.
BE PROACTIVE ABOUT THIS ISSUE
1. Urge anyone you know who is considering a visit to Belize to **AVOID** The Maruba Lodge due to their continued irresponsible behaviour.
2. Express your concern and opposition to the selling of “Viper Rum” directly to Maruba Lodge: maruba@btl.net.
There should be a concerted and unified effort in Belize to preserve this country’s unique natural resources - a **HUGE Thumbs down** to The Maruba Lodge for their low class performance.

1/2 acre lots in Burrel Boom starting at \$10K Call 600-1627 for details	10 acre plots in Burrel Boom starting at \$50K Call 600-1627 for details	Single-12 acre plot in Ladyville \$120,000K Call 600-1627 for details
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Parties -Conduits for Corruption

by Des Parette

Elections will soon be upon us, which means we have to decide who we are going to vote for. Who? Well maybe “what” we will vote for is more accurate, because traditionally it has only been a question of Blue or Red, not which individual we want to represent us. All two party political systems end up this way with the individual representatives subsuming their identities under their party labels. This destroys the whole concept of representative government, the very basis for our democratic republic. Of course some of our representatives were so bad the only way they could be elected was to have a Blue or Red endorsement!

We can’t all sit in Belmopan and make the decisions that affect our nation... although sometimes we wish we could... so we elect our representatives to do the job for us. The idea is, when you have several candidates to choose from, you see what each of them stands for and then vote for the one that you think will do the best job. Our two party system though does not allow this. Usually all we know is what the Party stands for, but have no idea about the candidate. Sounds ridiculous, but it doesn’t make much difference anyway because not only are the candidates not permitted to vote according to their conscience, they are required to vote according to the dictates of the party leaders; in fact the law prohibits party members from voting against their party! Can you imagine that?

Political parties are nothing more than power structures created by vested interests to control the politics of a nation; vested interests meaning the money and power brokers. The party system actually destroys our democratic processes by taking control away for the people and concentrating it in the hands of a few power brokers who then manipulate the government for their own benefit. The two party system is the most destructive “democratic” politically system of all, because the political leaders are the ones who decide who the candidates will be... who the public can vote for. This means that our political leaders, who are part of or under the control of the money and power brokers, make sure that the candidates up for election are properly under their party control.

The U.S. actually believes that their government system is the optimum achievement for political schemes, and they promote it to every emerging country as if it will solve all the problems of the world. But even with the American built in checks and balances and a great amount of accountability, which we Belizeans don’t have, corruption in US politics is obvious and some believe the

American people have long since lost any and all control over their government. Our Belizean system is modeled after elitist Westminster British law for the wealthy, so it is not surprising that the Belizean people have never had control of their government... and never will unless some dramatic changes can be made.

Our political professionals do not want to change the system because they know that the Belizean people will eventually get disgusted with the corruption of the party in power and at the next election it will be the other party’s turn to sell passports and public lands, protect their drug running and car stealing friends, and generally manipulate the government assets for their own enrichment. Lawyers don’t want a change either because the cumbersome court system is very profitable to the law fraternity, and most political representatives are practicing lawyers.

Strangely, we Belizean voters can not change our Constitution; only these same lawyers and representatives can. When the Constitution interferes with the government pillaging of the public, the same power broker lackeys in our legislature have the power to change the Constitution to aid in their plundering. Our Constitution is supposed to be the legal framework, the laws, within which the legislature must work, but in our system, instead of the Constitution controlling the legislature, the legislature controls the Constitution... and the laws. Effectively then, the political parties, with their control of the legislature, have taken all control of our government away from our people.

The most damaging role of the parties, though, is they are the active conduits for corruption. You want a questionable loan from Social Security or DFC? The Party makes it happen for Party supporters. Need the government to guarantee a bad loan that can never be repaid? The Party makes it happen for Party supporters. Need some protection from the police because you got caught with a bunch of stolen cars, or you got drunk and ran into a group of children coming out of church? The Party takes care of Party supporters. Want to buy a printing company or one of our precious islands or an lucrative exclusive contract for a tourist village or cruise ship port? Not to worry, the Party makes it happen for Party supporters.

Electricity, telephone, banking, oil and other special industry interests know all they have to do is pay their bribe money... ahhh I mean political “donations”... to the Party bosses and they will get the protection or special privileges they want. The power brokers know that Party members are required by their own laws to vote as their Party dictates. To make certain things

go their way, special interests will make donations to both parties, and no matter who wins they can’t lose. Without the political Party, the money interests would have to negotiate with each individual or independent candidate running, which is fortunately almost impossible. You can see how Independents could be a real pain in the butt if they become common. The Two Parties, of course, greedily accept these funds and use them to buy votes and improve the life style of their leaders.

To completely protect themselves from any interference or control by the Belizean voters, who they are supposed to be protecting, the government passed laws claiming that their Minister’s decisions are final and can not be reviewed, effectively declaring that government officials are not only above the law but even above the Constitution. Apparently our laws are to be used so the government can control the voters, while making sure we Belizeans have no control over our government.

Most democratic political systems have provisions for public referendums, which is a system where the general public can cause an issue to be placed on a ballot to be voted on, and if passed by the majority of votes cast, will be binding upon the government. Public referendums give the general public some control over their government, so of course this is not an option for Belizeans. Just imagine how things would change if we Belizeans could get referendums on the ballot that are binding on the government that would require

that 25% of all the oil income would be used exclusively for education, health care and job creation? Or that the government could not borrow any more money and must work with a balanced budget? Or that government officials that are so stupid as to actually get caught at their corruption be stripped of the assets and pensions and serve time in jail? Well, you get the idea.

We have almost no hope of the now fascist-functioning legislature making any changes that will put our Belizean people back in control. We **can** change this by electing a lot more independent representatives, thus preventing anyone one Party from controlling the legislature... and the Constitution. What we need is good independent candidates who will publish a platform telling us what they believe and will try to do, and then we need to elect enough of them to break the power block of our current Two Party choke-hold. If we can accomplish that, perhaps we can force a Constitutional convention and remove the ability of the legislature to change our Constitution to suit their plundering desires; enforce annual audit accountability; place government officials under full control of the law; introduce the public referendum; and place control of our country back to where it belongs - in the hands of the Belizean people.

Governments are supposed to exist for the benefit of the people, but in Belize our people exist for the benefit of the government. This must change.

Fear Factor

➡ (Continued From Page 4)
during a recent investigation, “We couldn’t just let that money sit there doing nothing.” Doing nothing but ensuring pensions and benefits for those depending on social security!

The people hell bent on destroying this country are able to do so because they no longer care what people think of them, do not fear being perceived as confrontational or insulting. They do not care if the rest of us find their violence abhorrent, their activities illegal or immoral. Break they law? Why bother, just change it. Banking regulations and loan disbursement guidelines? Those are for the little people, the fools who will never be rich. Because they are too afraid of money, of taking risk!

How do you counter these Kamakaze? How do you stop the suicide bomber as he rampages through a neighborhood of children after his gang rival? How do you arrest a man who heads the national security forces, force a politician to step down when he still believes a party leadership title has made him a king?

Certainly not by letting them bully us.

Allowing them to beat us with the tamarind whip and then order us to thank them for giving us fewer lashes than they claim another master would have.

Do not believe them when they hint at “possible” victimization, job losses, industry collapse, and economic disaster. These things are already happening, with as much regularity as the neighborhood shootings, shop jackings and weekly road kill.

The bulls *know where the weak fence dey*. How much more national land can we allow them to trample, how many more homes can they barge into, how many children can they steal, how many men and women have to be gored and left for dead before we mend our fences? Stand up in our own defence?

For if we do not do this, now, today, we will have no boundaries at all tomorrow.

We will be left with nothing but our own fears and excuses for why we DID nothing. And memories of standing on the sidelines cheering someone else on who had more courage, more love for this land, than we could muster. Even to save ourselves.

TOPICAL TIDBITS

Belize top of favorite list.

The German Press Agency reports that while, right now, Panama is red-hot, experts see Honduras , Nicaragua and Belize as the likely next big things in the foreign-home rush.

“These countries have done a great job of opening up their second-home market,” said Jeff Hornberger, an executive at the US National Association of Realtors.

“They see it as an economic development tool. Central America has the natural advantage of closeness and, for better or worse, historical ties. Little things make a difference - for example, that Panama ‘s currency is the US dollar.

“Latin America is what’s booming right now and it’s offering a lifestyle that people can’t afford any more in the US,” Hornberger said. “And people are making money on their property, too.”



Cruise ship gridlock!

But one thing Europeans and Americans planning to move here might consider first: cruise ship crunch. Normal traffic jams general clear here within minutes, but it took a lot longer for the bus and human gridlock, which resulted from 5 cruise ships dropping their flotsam all on the same day in one huge heap on Belize City last week, to clear.

The Traffic Department and Citco need to look into this.

Visitors should be careful they are not forced by the crush into “no go” areas of the City when they disembark! Of course, how safe is the Tourism Village with metal gates dropping on guests and sending them to the hospital? So I smell a lawsuit?



Belize City garbage

Anyone planning to buy a house in Belize better get a trash compactor!

The dump outside Belize City is not only a 15 foot high eyesore, a health hazard and a stink pile that makes you hold your nose as you drive the Western Highway, it is also “out of control”. According for Channel 5, garbage now fills the entire piece of property to the point where the security booth will soon

be buried under its own heap of trash. The road that leads to the back of the site disappeared long ago and there is no longer access into the compound. The garbage has overrun the dump’s entrance, making it a danger to motorists traveling the western highway.

Before you blame the present city council, just remember that this pile of rubbish grew to its present hazardous state under our uncaring old PUP city council. And, didn’t a PUP politician (recently defeated at the polls have something to do with the so called cleaning up of the city’s garbage problem? And have some money allocated to himself for the project? The PUP government promised way back to put into effect a Waste Solid Management Project that was specifically designed to address this problem. Where is it? Buried with the expansion of Lord’s Ridge Cemetery?



Mexico looks ahead.

Mexico’s finance minister, Augustin Carstens, has taken a quick look at Europe’s recent history and decided that Mexico can progress, within two decades, as fast as Spain and Ireland have progressed in the past 20 years.

“These are countries that in 20 years have carried out significant changes in their productive structure, per-capita income, in the well-being of the population and I believe that Mexico is in a position to do something similar,” he said.

He is probably right because Mexico today is booming- left right and center - and, with investors getting worried about the US balance of payments, Mexico is beginning to look like an excellent financial gamble.



China plans corruption agency

China plans a new corruption agency after almost 100,000 party members were disciplined for misconduct last year. Beijing is on an anti-corruption drive that has seen a number of senior

Communist Party figures sacked. In 2006, about 97,000 officials were found guilty of bribe-taking or breaching financial rules. The new national anti-corruption body will have offices in many of the country’s far-flung provinces. It’s often there, far from the eyes of Beijing , that most of China ‘s illegal land deals and bribery take place.

Ironically, it is in our capitol, Belmopan, that most of our illegal land deals and bribery occurs!



Nicaragua’s reforms.

Just as Belize appears to be moving away from a true democratic parliamentary system (as it governs by executive decree) Nicaragua has announced that its constitution will be reformed this year, to give way to a parliamentary government system, or at least semi-parliamentary. Rafael Solis, vice president of the Nicaraguan Supreme Court of Justice, said the legislative commission in charge of studying the constitutional changes will be formed after the approval of the reforms to the General Budget of the Republic in March or April. He stated that if a totally parliamentary system is not approved, at least more faculties would be granted to the National Assembly.

I wonder what our National Assembly and Senate have to say about that?



Impeachment for Bush?

Senator Ted Kennedy has proposed legislation which, if passed, would have dire consequences for the Bush administration if they continue to defy Congress.

According to Kennedy, “In 2002, the Bush Administration’s case for war focused on Saddam’s supposed stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction and alleged ties to al Qaeda. In October of the same year Congress authorized a war against the regime of Saddam Hussein, not to send our troops into a civil war. I voted against the resolution and feel an escalation of this war only compounds the original mistake of going in the first place.”

If Congress votes against the escalation and Bush does as he claims he will do, which is to defy Congress, then the resulting “Congressional Crisis” would force Democrats to put impeachment back on the table.

Kennedy: “There are many reasons to impeach George Bush and Dick Cheney. Chief among them is for ‘violating the United Nations Charter by launching an illegal ‘War of Aggression’ against Iraq without cause, using fraud to sell the war to Congress and the public, misusing government funds to begin bombing without Congressional authorization, and subjecting our military personnel to unnecessary harm, debilitating injuries, and deaths.”

Visit The Belize Zoo

The Best Little Zoo In The World

PNP announces “A New Path for Belize”



Belizeans gathered from Toledo and all over the country for the launch of the People’s National Party in San Antonio Village on Saturday, Feb 17.

➡ (Continued From Page 1)

Representative and founder of the People’s National Party. Maheia continues, “We must all come together and support honest leadership. The PNP pledges to break down the culture of corruption that has plagued our country for too long and build a new path for Belize.”

“We are determined to get into government so that government can focus on the things that make our jobs better, our families more secure and our communities more prosperous,” said Dionicio Choc. “We want people in positions of power that work for working people.”

The People’s National Party will take positive action to tackle the issues that most Belizeans care about like:

- Combating corruption in the highest levels of government through actions like campaign finance reform and public oversight of major contracts with GOB as well as revamping the Public Utilities Commission; also, decentralizing decision-making to put more power in the hands of the Belizean people by giving more authority to local government and by establishing a system of referendum;
- Promoting job creation through development of Belize’s tourism and agricultural industries and promoting sustainable development by attracting investors who care about Belize and its people,
- Supporting Belizean businesses by promoting entrepreneurship, skills training and fairness in bidding for government contracts;
- Designing a new energy plan for Belize that puts the needs of people before the profits of the share holders and stops the growing debt in energy production;
- Improving our schools from early childhood education through high school and making education free and

available for all;

- Making healthcare affordable and available to all Belizeans;

“Every citizen of this country should be guaranteed that his representative in government is looking out for his interests as much as that of any CEO,” said Dionicio Choc. “It has become abundantly clear that our current government leaders have no core values. It is all about staying in power and filling their pockets.”

Wil Maheia has been a leader in Belize in fighting for innovative projects to build Belize in a responsible manner. Maheia added: “Our vision for economic development is to boost Belize’s appeal as an ideal destination for tourism and businesses while preserving our natural resources.” Maheia continued, “This requires comprehensive, long-term planning with business partners who care about the people of Belize.”

“The People’s National Party started out as a grass roots effort, just friends and neighbors talking, and it is a great example of how a small group of people can really make a difference,” said Dionicio Choc.

“One of the fundamental questions of this election is what kind of leadership do Belizeans want?” said Wil Maheia. “Belize is at a crossroads in this election, do we demand an open and honest government or do we allow a few to rule behind closed doors?”

“We have a moral obligation to ensure the integrity of our country. We will not allow more scandals like the BTL scandal, the Social Security scandal, the ill-advised selling of the government printery. We cannot let another election go by that leaves this corrupt government in power. Enough is enough!” declares Maheia.

Social Page



Marlon Castillo and team sponsor Santino Castillo are all smiles after Marlon won his second consecutive M&M Tour de Belize.



Greg Lovell won 4 stages of this year’s M&M Tour de Belize, including the final stage.

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