

The Independent

Reform for the People

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Pussy Foot Politics Cat and Mouse in the Senate

Contributed

At the last Senate hearing, the Belizean public heard Senator Godwin Hulse voice his frustration that the Senate could not get more details of Government's proposed bond for US \$565 million. He objected to the speed at which it is was being rushed through the house and the Senate's helplessness to stop it or even slow it down. Senator Dickie Bradley, leader of government business in the Senate reminded him that the Senate is essentially a rubber stamp on money bills and that the non-elected members should not presume to have as much say in these matters as the House of Representatives.

Clearly the time has come for the Senators of Belize to be empowered to do more for this country than they can at the moment. There have been rumblings for years about the need for Senate Reform, but perhaps now, Belizeans, and Senators, see for themselves than an elected Senate, on

equal footing with the other members of the House, is something whose time has come.

In this writer's opinion, an elected Senate is critical to putting the breaks on the current government's runaway economic train and give the appearance of putting the people back in the driver's seat.


An elected Senate is something the PUP themselves should welcome if their 1998 campaign manifesto is to be believed. In that year the PUP promised: "to ensure a real separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches and reduce the power of ministers to make or bend laws".

That is exactly what an elected Senate with mid term elections would have done—and could still do— if either political party were truly interested in stopping corruption.

Belizeans have learned a sad lesson about political promises; that they are most often false political rhetoric which

is completely ignored after the election. During the last national election campaign in 2003, it appeared that the PUP was loosing public support due to perception that corruption was rampant in government. Prime Minister and Party Leader, Said Musa, saved the day for the PUP. He acknowledged the corruption and promised to stamp it out. But as we enter 2007, the stamping hasn't started yet! Instead public perception is that the party leader is now dictator and his rule is bordering on tyranny.

Government makes no attempt to cover, or even justify the corrupt acts, it just allows them to continue. Belizeans, it seems, can do nothing for under the present political system there is no way to check those in power. As far as the Government is concerned if you do not like the way they do business, you can go to hell. The corruption has been brazen and open; however, it is clear none of the politicians have been prosecuted for any misappropriation of

funds or diverting money from national development projects, risking public investments, pillaging public financial institutions, or taking money under false pretenses for non-existent projects or (Please Turn To Page 3) 

Bruk-dong King '06



Kenny Morgan says 'Enuff iz Enuff'
(See review on pg. 4)

They call me

back door santa



This Christmas looks bright for Musa while the new year looks dim for Belizeans (See cartoon on pg. 4)



New Loans

CDB: US\$ 12.6M (Ara Macao Road)?
CDB: US\$25M (Loan Refinancing)?
Venezuela: US\$25M + US\$25M + US\$25M + US\$25....?
IBOM: US\$83 M ?
RBTT: Dry up?
IDB: US\$25 Loan?
Cuba: Light up the Night?
Taiwan: More chedda?

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Fisherman
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Editorial Director

Meb Cutlack

Editor

Karla Heusner Vernon

Design/Layout

Marigold Enterprise

General Manager

Trevor Vernon

Published by:

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Company Ltd.
P.O. Box 2666
Belize C.A.

Telephones:

(501) 225-3520

Email:

independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com

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Editorial Note

In this, the fourth issue of Independent Reformer Weekly, I take the opportunity to thank all our readers and distributors countrywide and wish you Happy Holidays. The Independent is taking the decision to skip the Christmas week and come out again January 2nd. It should be an exciting issue because we will be selecting the Man and Woman of the Year as well as mentioning some other notable events and people of 2006.

It's hard to believe this year is over, it seemed to go so quickly. But as we rush headlong into 2007 it is with a renewed sense of purpose. The feeling is palatable across the country and Belizeans seem to have a greater sense that change is upon us, and that we must take advantage of the opportunities being presented to us all. There has been so much negativity, even desperation, over the past few months. That is not necessarily a bad thing; for people only change their situation when things are uncomfortable.

Those few who still comfortable are realizing, very quickly, that those who make their soft life possible are becoming increasingly unhappy with the struggle just to maintain a modest home and lifestyle. Too many Belizeans have seen their spending power diminish this past year, too many have begun to feel not only are they not getting ahead; they are hardly breaking even anymore. People who once lived paycheck to paycheck are not finding themselves selling off the few things they own to carry themselves over the rest of the month and living paycheck to several paychecks down the road.

We used to wish each other a prosperous new year, now some hardly remember what prosperity felt like or if it will ever come again.

But it must, for as the wheel of fortune turns down, so it will turn back up. Many Belizeans feel the country has already hit the lowest point of the cycle and there is no where

to go but up. But they also know it won't just happen by magic. That no foreign power will rescue us, and no established political party in country will either.

Whatever crashing through of the elite glass ceiling needs to be done will be done from underneath. In our hearts, we all prefer peaceful change; but whether it happens that way or through violence will depend not so much on our own intentions, but on their resistance, and reluctance, to do the right thing and step aside, and down.

As we pray they find the wisdom to continue the peaceful, constructive revolution and put their own self interest aside, we will try to enjoy the holy-days and recharge our energies.

The staff of the Independent Reformer Weekly wishes you all a blessed Christmas



and thanks you for seeking us out each week and sharing your thoughts with your friends, families and associates.

Seasons Greetings everyone, meet you back here, January 2nd, 2007.

Letter to the Editor

Clarification of terms and phrases

Madam Editor,

We want to congratulate the Independent on your new enterprise. We are offering this criticism of your article entitled Election shugga daddy(s), December 5 issue, in hopes that you do not follow the path of many newspapers before you.

We have no problem with the article itself, but with a phrase you used at the end: "if one tells a little lie no one will believe it; if many people tell a big lie promises big results everyone will believe it. The communist philosophy suggests that if you tell a lie often enough the people will believe it." The actual quote is: "The broad mass of a nation will more easily fall victim to a big lie

than a small one" and it comes from Adolph Hitler, in Mein Kampf, who was a fascist (right-wing), not a communist. [anyone wanting clarification of those terms, can email us at geocanbz@gmail.com].

The above is a perfect example of a lie being repeated so often, it is accepted as truth. Communism and Fascism are not the same thing. The communists would not quote a fascist who was responsible for the murders and extermination of millions of communists, labor leaders, and minority groups.

Just trying to keep it honest.

Signed: George and Candy Gonzalez

The INdependent Reformer

independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com

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Pussy Foot Politics

➡ (Continued From Page 1)

causes. Nor does it appear anyone is likely to be prosecuted, not even after public hearings and investigations such as those for the Social Security Board or the Development Finance Corporation. In fact, word is the Prime Minister is attempting to wiggle out of testifying before the DFC Commission!

Since Independence, corruption has continued throughout the successive changes of Government. Many people believe democracy no longer exists in Belize, that instead we are under a tightly controlled dictatorship. The rebel ministers, dubbed the “G7”, found out the extent of the tyrant’s powers. The only limitation that appears to be on the Prime Minister is the length of his term in office!

This is not just my own view, the Political Reform Commission (appointed by the Prime Minister himself in 1999) had similar concerns about corruption and Belize’s vulnerability to the power hungry. In the summary of the Political Reform Commission Report of 2000, the Commissioners wrote “The House and even more the Senate serves largely as rubber stamps for cabinet decisions”. They continued, “the system is in essence a dictatorship of the cabinet.”

Is it any wonder only a fraction of the Commission’s recommendations were adopted by the Prime Minister and made into law by the House of Representatives?

It’s almost a trite saying these days that “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.” But it is that absolute power that Belize’s politicians wish to retain. Which is precisely why they do not want an elected Senate. This would give too much autonomy for the people’s representatives and make them too accountable to their constituents.

Under the present system, the Prime Minister appoints members of the National Assembly to head the various ministries. If a particular Minister doesn’t go along with the wishes of the Prime Minister, the PM can remove him from his Ministry and appoint another who will.

With an elected Senate and the terms of office reduced to four years, the senators could be changed. The first Senate would only be elected for two years.

Thereafter the senate elections would take place every 4 years between the national elections, that is, 2 years after which would also be 2 years before a national election. A corrupt Government could not continue for long and even if those in charge did get out of line, they could not exploit their positions for more than 2 years for as soon as Belizeans became aware of what was happening the voters could stop it by bringing in a new slate of Senators or Representatives as the time period might dictate.

The present party heads do not want the voters to have this type of power or give the country of Belize the same successful checks and balances that the United State of America has had with its elected Senate. More than two hundred years of successful operation in the USA has proved the value of an elected Senate. The elected Senate can check the actions of the House of Representatives and likewise, the House of Representatives can check any improper or unwise actions of the Senate.

The November 2006 mid-term election in the United States of America has again proved the value of an elected, not appointed, Senate. It proved that

an elected Senate is indispensable for good Government. The Republican party, which was the party in power, lost control of the Senate and the democrats are now in the majority. This turnaround was a direct response by American voters to what they considered bad Government. The President heard their call and has gotten their message, loud and clear.

Imagine if Belizean voters could send their Prime Minister and his Cabinet and Area Representatives the same signals. If Belizeans could ensure that that only legislation that is good for the country will be passed and that no national leader could ever assume **the position of dictator**.

The PUP has failed for eight years to fulfill its 1998 promise that would require an elected Senate. The UDP’s leadership is also against an elected Senate. Their reasons are dependant on who they are speaking to and runs the gamut from (1) an elected Senate would be too expensive (2) the UDP should have its turn in office.

An elected Senate would certainly not be more expensive, rather it would be a great money saver, saving millions lost to the people annually through unfettered corruption. The second statement is startling for it implies the UDP wants the same chance at corruption that the PUP has had! Do UDP officials seek office simply so they can also garner additional money for their own retirements?

If this is the case, the UDP should not be elected to office, either. Enough is enough.

Belize, though small, is a great country with a great potential. However, one-third of Belize’s citizens live below the poverty level, 24% of the people are functionally illiterate and 50% of the children do not finish primary school. The country has a

national debt of \$2 Billion plus. Why should the head of ANY political party have the power to wreak such havoc, to destroy the economy rather than build it, to ruin people’s lives rather than provide opportunities?

The Government has openly entered into bloated contracts, paying as much as twice the value for the same services from a legitimate contractor. The Government has paid millions in excess of their appraised values for properties they have purchased. The Government has sold properties and businesses for a fraction of their appraised values.

The politicians and their cronies have waxed fat from the above transactions.

Someone has to pay their bills. Those someone’s are the Belizean people. The middle class and poor now bear the burden of the high taxes and inflation while the politicians and their cronies live high on the hog.

Which brings us to the real reason the politicians don’t want an elected Senate: it would prevent the leader of the party and Prime Minister from becoming the Supreme Authority and stop his sharing of the booty pillaged from the nation, among its politicians—both blue and red.

Those who do not want an elected Senate, do not want a solution to corruption. They do not want the power placed with the people where it belongs and they do not deserve our votes. They should not even be considered for office.

It is not too late; both the PUP and UDP have the power to proposed an elected Senate. And if one does so and the other doesn’t support it, well, the voters will know immediately which party is really seeking reform and which one wants to maintain the status quo.

If neither proposes it before the next General Election, then clearly alternative party would be a better choice.



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Bruk it down

Karla Heusner Vernon

Dressed in full yellow, with matching suede tennis shoes, Kenny Morgan—radio announcer, singer, composer, poet and political activist shook his dread locks and told the expectant audience at the Bliss Centre for Performing Arts he was warned he'd lose the Brukdong music competition if he sang "Enuffiz Enuff."

Then he sang it.

Morgan's critics were wrong; because he DID win with the controversial song. Not only did he win Brukdong Artist of the Year, he got Song of the Year, even Special Award for content.

He takes home \$4250 in cash but most importantly of all, he has the support of the audience and judges.

If their reaction is any gauge of wider public opinion, then the government is in trouble. From this call and response musical session, Morgan was making the call, and his listeners were answering. Loudly.

Morgan must find it a sweet reward indeed to leave the Bliss a winner yet again; it's the second year this entertainer/activist has swept the Brukdong Competition. In 2005 he won Best New Artist, Artist of the Year and Song of the Year, edging out the landslide 2004 winner Leela Vernon.

What a stark comparison to being led away in handcuffs by police after the 2004 Lord Rhabum Music Awards to be held on vague charges he disrupted a National

Assembly Meeting. The words he shouted at the politicians in the House that day were nothing compared to the scathing comment he made Saturday night, and it was not only the PUP side that got the lick. Quite a comeback for the man whose poem about murdered girls was disqualified from a national poetry contest because it was deemed "unpatriotic."

But when he sang "vote for yu picney" and "vote fi Belize" the audience at this show went wild. They listened politely to songs about why we should love tourists and Christmas traditions; in deference to her stature in the music world perhaps, the judges gave Leela Vernon first runner up with a song about cahew and ginger wine.

But her son, Henry Genus III Martinez also took a political turn, urging Belizeans to take back their independence by "taking up their armor and clearing the land" returning to family plantations instead of becoming "yes men" to politicians.

Lennox Blades, a veteran of Mr. Peter's Boom and Chime Band went solo this year and impressed the audience with his guitar playing skills, both holding his instrument in the traditional way and then playing it behind his head. If there had been a category called "Audience Favorite" however, Alford Butler, would have grabbed that title for his riotous and silly "Ah Bawn Dadi Valley" in which he pretended to be himself as a boy and sang the praises of the Stann Creek Valley and played the harmonica. The audience quickly dubbed him "Valley Man" and showered him

with praise when he later joined the Playaz Band during a musical interlude while judges tallied the votes.

Mr. Wilfred Peters, the man whose very name is synonymous with this beloved Belizean style of music, was even more entertaining than usual, bantering playfully with Mistress of Ceremonies Myma Manzanares, putting down his accordion and joining the Playaz's Band while his own Boom and Chime Band was on a break.

The audience was as much a part of the show as the performers, and they shouted their encouragement and appreciation again and again. There was even dancing on the floor in front of the stage.

It felt, in so many ways, like the old days. Not the days of Ole Time Christmas with Boom and Chime and the Sorrel wine, but the days when Belizeans felt a little less heavy hearted, less burdened by debt and disaster, more in control of what was happening in this country and less at the mercy of the powers that be.

While all the songs and artists had their own appeal, the support for Kenny Morgan on Saturday night made it abundantly clear to me the days of people being afraid to speak their mind are over. The days of being afraid to vote for a controversial song—even when it is sung in a government run building—are behind us.

And perhaps the days certain politicians have left in office are also numbered as people echo Morgan's sentiment that Enuffiz Enuff.

Excerpts from "ENUFF IZ ENUFF" by Kenny Morgan

All across the country it's People Under Pressure
And it's not a pleasant feeling at all
Everywhere u turn Belizeans just di suffer
And every day u hear somebody else bawl
While the ones who are responsible for having us in this mess
Don't feel the pinch at all, they are living large
But if Musa is a man, tell him call the election
And let the people say who they want in charge ...
They sell out our assets and they pocket the funds
To share among their family and friends
Then when election time comes they throw us some crumbs
Then we don't see them until election time again
Life getting bitter for so many and better for so few
And the hardest worker end up with the least pay
But as sure as the wind does blow, as sure as baldy/ grow
Election day the people will have their say

Chorus: Enuff is Enuff, PUP got to go
They fail to deliver on the promises in their manifesto
They did a lot of talking just to get on top
But since then all they do is tax we till we drop
We made a very big mistake 2003 and 1998....



Total madness

By: Trevor Vernon



“Lawn the game, fool” this older inebriated friend of mine says to me in Kriol. “Tek keer of yourself first before you mess with those gangstas in government!”

“My bway, you need security; set up your own security system with people you know now and not people you mi know or think you know.”

“Sleep wid u own eye, bossman.”

I get a lot of great advice these days from friends who still sees me as the little scrawny pre-teen running around barefoot around the Caye where I vacationed as a child with my father’s entourage in its heyday. That was then; this is now. Paranoia rules my world today as government personnel try every trick in the book of hard knocks to rock my world in an effort to please their godfather.

I got my first “expected” rude awakening a year and a half ago when powerful people in Government thought it would be good time to send a message that to others I had no business criticizing GOB’s foreign policy. Six months earlier I had given an interview to a couple of DC-based reporters when asked about Belize’s foreign policy toward the Middle East. They asked the questions, and I agreed that yes, I thought the Musa government was playing undue hardball with the state of Israel and its representatives in the various international forums. I have no evidence to suggest this has changed today.

Anyway, six months after that most unfortunate interview and subsequent articles, I was looking down the barrels of state issue shotguns and 9mm firearms. Twelve fully armed ADU, Customs, BDF and other assorted personnel descended on my home in Ladyville, locked and loaded. One very young and very well briefed teenage officer wanted to know, “How come a man like you got mixed up in crime?” I was floored but learnt the game rather quickly. He subsequently offered to meet me alone with the real story, if I could give him some casino chips. Not interested, kiddo...unless you want to tell it to an independent Judge in a recorded statement... in Miami.

I had bought a car from a very colorful character in Belize City 6 weeks earlier for a pretty penny. But, at the time, I wanted decent transportation to ply the real estate trade and after all the emergency room experience with chest pains, in DC I felt I deserved it. Well, Waldo Emerson says life is what happens after you make your plans.

The car, as it turns out, was one of a

couple hundred smuggled in from Guatemala, detailed, illegally registered with GOB’s top personnel at the Traffic Department and then sold. The ring made out like bandits. Research shows them buying a “vehicle reported stolen” in Guatemala for around \$2500 USD, paying ‘mordida’ to get it driven across the Macal, and into Belize where unscrupulous civil servants and government contract officers forge

when my mail box was tampered with and made inoperable. No big deal. I paid what the contract officers wanted me to pay for a new lock: 25 buxx. Turns out that it’s not that simple. The lock seized, and they need the welder to take it off. I get this from a Postal Service worker with a smirk across his face. “And the welder comes in only when it’s convenient to him”. So I pay for a Post Office Box from government but can’t use it because their welder is busy and may be made busy for the next year? This is the registered PO Box of this newspaper I am talking about. How will they be able file their lawsuits against us?

“Before I criticized Mr. Musa’s foreign policy, I never experienced these irritations.”

customs documents to get it licensed. They are then boldly sold to unsuspecting Belizeans seeking a nice refurbished ride for about 50-70% of market value = 30-50 thousand dollars. What makes the scam work is the pretence of body work having been done to the vehicle and of course ministerial discretion and underworld connections.

Anyway, the matter is before the courts and we must respect the court’s jurisdiction and independence. I won’t comment further and risk revealing my sources or worse.

Last week, I got a little more of the ire that exists in some government quarters


Now we do a lot of mailing: bulk mail. First week we are charged 25 cents per local item but second week new guy says its over 50 grams and we must pay 40 cents per. I reason with him and ask to see his scale. He sees the error of his ways after a little convincing and reluctantly agrees that the items are below the 50 grams cutoff. “The one I weighed was definitely over the mark”, he says. I throw on ten at random and they are all under. Ah, I wasn’t disappointed today. Maybe the fact that “River of Fire” was sharing some of his written poems with me in the middle of the negotiations helped my position.

Who knows?

Before I criticized Mr. Musa’s foreign policy, I never experienced these irritations. Now whatever I do, I expect them. The word is out; but, funny thing is since I spoke out against the pup government’s foreign policy positions in Washington, I sleep much better at night. In addition, the ulcers, migranes, and trips to the emergency room are no more. You can buy my silence but you can’t buy my state of wellness. My choices; no apologies, no regrets. And by the way, just for the record, I was highly critical of Mr. Esquivel’s introductory rate of 15% for VAT in 1998. I still think people in Washington did a number on him and destroyed his popularity and his government’s. No apologies there either.

Finally, there is another matter that bears mentioning: it’s this legal requirement where new newspapers must get the approval of the Solicitor Generals office the other day before going to press. Ours took a while and the wait almost frustrated the entire effort, but for the grace of God. Apparently, two others were not so lucky. Was in an office the other day and caught glimpse of paperwork on their demise. I would like to encourage those folks to still publish or contact us to explore some synergistic options.

There are other developments in this newspaper business that we are keeping a very close eye on as it relates to Trojan horses and old acquaintances. We at the Independent take nothing for granted and do sleep with our own eyes and security cameras and are quickly learning the game, too.



VISION *INSPIRED* by the **PEOPLE**
1 Cardinal Street
Tel: 802-2926
E-mail: vip@reformbelize.org
Website: <http://vip.reformbelize.org>

December 6, 2006

Dear Friends:

The VIP Executive respectfully announces that over the past three months, the party explored a political merger option with other Belizean “third parties” and “Independents”. Our prerequisites to seriously consider merger were that the VIP and its prospective partners:

1. Establish Common Direction.
2. Create Synergy.

While Common Direction was largely established, Synergy was not.

In order to give due respect and opportunity to the others pursuing the merger, the VIP now withdraws from that effort.

The VIP however remains open and welcoming to anyone with a common direction who is open to the building of a cooperative relationship aimed at serving the people of Belize.

Signed on Behalf of the VIP

Hubert Enriquez
Secretary General

Paul M. Morgan Sr.
Chairman

General Assembly urges action to protect world’s fish stocks

Responding to the depletion of fish stocks and degradation of fragile marine habitats in many parts of the world, the United Nations General Assembly has called on States to take immediate action to reverse the situation and protect vulnerable deep sea ecosystems.

Adopting a consensus resolution on sustainable fisheries, the Assembly called on all States to act in a precautionary manner and apply an “ecosystem approach” to the conservation, management and exploitation of fish stocks.

The resolution also expressed the Assembly’s particular concern that illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing constituted a serious threat to fish stocks and marine habitats and ecosystems, to the detriment of sustainable fisheries, as well as the States were encouraged to take measures to deter illegal,



For every one pound of shrimp caught, trawlers haul in 20 lbs of fish stock which is then discarded

unreported and unregulated fishing activities, and to facilitate mutual assistance to investigations and punishment as needed.

The adoption of the resolution followed a two-day debate on the issue, with nearly three dozen countries participating.

Over half – 52 per cent – of global fish stocks are fully exploited, while overexploited and depleted species have increased from about 10 per cent in the mid 1970s to 24 per cent in 2002, according to a study, ‘Ecosystems and Biodiversity in Deep Waters and High Seas’, which was issued jointly by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) earlier this year.



Christmas Riddles

1. What do elves learn in school?
2. What is the difference between the Christmas alphabet and the ordinary alphabet?
3. What Christmas Carol is a favorite of parents?
4. Why does Santa have 3 gardens?
5. What kind of candle burns longer, a red candle or a green candle?
6. What do you get if you deep fry Santa Claus?
7. Why was Santa’s little helper depressed?

Turn upside down for the answers

1. The elf-abet

2. The Christmas alphabet has No L (noel)

3. Silent night

4. So he can hoe hoe hoe

5. Neither, candles always burn shorter

6. Crisp Cringle

7. He had low elf esteem

The logo for Cheers restaurant features the word "Cheers" in a stylized, cursive font. Below the text, a silhouette of a person is shown hanging upside down from the letter "h".

With a Tropical Twist

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Get off bus at Catholic Church on
Main & Church Streets, walk down
hill 75 yards to Guesthouse.

Lots of Bark but no Bite

By Meb Cutlack

The tourism industry in Belize reaches into every nook and cranny in the country and in its various guises, as BTIA, BHA, has over 650 members and (with the tour guides association) has in excess of 1600 direct members. Many of the organizations support between 5 and 20 employees. Call the average 10 and, even without counting tour guides, this amounts to a minimum access to 7,000 persons or, when you add relations and families who directly benefit from the industry, that figure magnifies to probably 50,000 or more.

Of course, down the line, the industry does in fact impact on a lot more persons but, even when you only think of the 50,000 plus, you realize that something is very wrong with the voice of the industry.

It is a giant that so far just squeaks. It does not call out to be heard or demand anyone to listen.

It is a sleeping giant, stung continually by the wasps of government and mauled by officialdom but which, until now, has shrugged these annoyances and bites off.

It takes, still lying down, the fact that the only tourism group connected to Belize Tourism Board planning is the

Belize Tour Guides Association.

There is absolutely no representation on the BTB from the two major industry associations, the Belize Tourism Industry Association or the Belize Hotel Association or from the Belize Eco Tourism Association - which are organizations with over 650 members.

In simple language that means that Belize’s tourism policy and its implementation is without input of any sort from the very pillars of tourism, the

“Yes! That’s how the BTB principally relates to the tourism industry, hounding it for funds and almost blind to its problems.”

hotels, lodges and other tourism industry sources. It is a little like forming an agricultural board and not including anyone with agricultural knowledge or experience.

This is supposed to be tourism industry ‘planning’ but a recent paper from the BTB

reflects how hollow this planning is.

The BTB spends \$11,000,000 per annum on

- FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION
- MARKETING
- PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT
- HOTELS DEPARTMENT

And note: “The hotels Department ensures that the accommodation sector complies with the Hotels and Tourist Accommodation Act, Chapter 285 of the

packers and bus riders. They now either go through Belize in under 24 hours or go around via Mexico and Guatemala.

By The BTB’s own admission there are in Belize:

- * over 575 registered hotels
- * over 4,000 persons employed in the accommodations sector
- * over 200 registered and licensed tour operators
- * over 1,100 tour guides

I wish it were true when they name the Belize Tourism Industry Association, Belize National Tour Operators Association, Belize National Tour Guides Association, Belize Hotel Association and NGO’s etc. as: “formulating policies and legislation for the tourism industry.”

It simply is not true. The powers that be in the Cruise Ship Industry have the clout, which is listened to, while true hotel and ecotourism operators whisper and go unheard.

That could all change very abruptly if, and when, the various industry resources such as BTIA, BHA, the tour guides and eco tourism operators all come together and create a combined policy coordinating committee to speak with one loud voice to the BTB and the Government.

It is not now even a matter of “if” they come together, to speak in a loud and clear voice, but “when” - and the recent finance and tax squandering by Government on the cruise ship and shrimp farm industries make a single loud voice for tourism essential.



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WeBAD

We Belizeans Against the Dam

CHALLILO DAM is still a LIE

Our electricity bills have skyrocketed

The fish are not safe to eat

The Macal River looks and smells bad

**We don’t know how safe the Macal River water is -
to drink or to swim in.**

**We still don’t know what to do if there is
a dam break emergency.**

**Fortis/BECOL failed to keep their
promises on the Chalillo Dam.**

**On Vaca Dam, estimated cost of US\$50 million!!
they are not making promises (only profits)**

TOPICAL TIDBITS

Cost of poverty higher than helping

According to the UK government the spread of poverty among citizens has costly and scary consequences.

It leads to painful, devastating and damaging effects on the economies and security of nations.

The government recently authorized providing poor families with fruit and vegetables free of charge. The government made this decision after studies and statistics proved that 85% of the poor complain that they're not able to pay their bills or afford to buy their food, medications or clothes. Many of them are forced to borrow. Children are deprived of basic necessities because their parents cannot afford them.

The British government came to the conclusion that the cost of this social assistance is less than the cost of imprisoning people who commit poverty-related crimes, such as armed robbery and other

forms of theft.
Take note Belize!

BBC disappears

It was a brutal shock to listeners a year or so ago when BBC radio just vanished from its old airwaves and it became easier to get a Chinese English news report than try to find the BBC. A further shock now as the TV Cable companies throughout Belize have evidently chopped out of their schedules all BBC news broadcasts. Its goodbye to one of the last fairly independent international TV news broadcasts.

The cable companies should think again - and also be obliged under their licenses to rebroadcast Belize City TV news coverage to all the districts.

That GST again!

GST is a farce in many districts simply because the only ones penalized are those who obey the

rules. Bob Jones at Evas in San Ignacio reported to the GST board 6 months ago that he was getting receipts from suppliers without the receipt carrying the GST column specifying the GST. They did nothing. This meant that if he took the GST off the bill he ended up paying GST twice without possibility of getting it back and was fined. Bob specifically mentioned that the GST inspector was sympathetic and not to blame but just doing her job...

Hospital Farce

Nothing is clearer from the Universal Health Services/Karl Heusner hospital farce than that the Government, the Development Finance Corporation and the Belize Bank are the principal bad guys. UHS had a clear contract for a loan for relatively low interest from DFC for funds which the DFC failed to provide. This resulted in high

interest borrowing (14% to 22%) from the Belize Bank, and this guaranteed by government. In this manner, a moderate loan to update and modernize became a financial nightmare. The crux of this perhaps inadvertent conspiracy is still to come - if and when the Belize Bank is handed huge chunks of and in San Pedro and/or becomes two thirds owner of all the health facilities in the country!

BTB boondoggle

The country is proud to have a huge BTB headquarters in Belize City and new and attractive expensive Social Security buildings in many districts. One problem! Unless these HQ's also provide rentable space for the private sector, and therefore pay their way, they are expensive "boondoggles" and should have their staff and office space severely restricted to a necessary minimum and have rental contracts offered to all comers.

UDP panic about independents

By Meb Cutlack

No greater compliment that can be paid to the potential power of independent candidates in the next election than the sense of panic now running through the UDP.

In last week's Guardian newspaper they even give a run down of the various parties and name many of the independent candidates.

They suggest that there is a real row going on as to who would lead the independents and who should emerge as Prime Minister in the event of a independent 'party' victory.

Well, of course the next election will not be so much about an independent party 'winning' the election but about by enough independent candidates being elected to stand like guardians between one or the other traditional parties continuing to rule Belize as if it is an oligarchy.

Whenever the election comes there is a good chance, thanks to their diehards, of PUP and UDP getting some 19 or 20 seats between them. That leaves the rest up for grabs by the Independents. The independents would then be in a position to dictate who ruled Belize but on certain conditions.

These conditions could, and conceivably should, include:

- An elected Senate. Elected on a different time mechanism than the Lower House members, serving

- 7 years and composed of at least 15 members
- Land distribution reform - giving land distribution to district committees comprised of local political, business and religious elements..
 - A revision of 'general revenue' practices to enable better accounting and fixed budgets for ministries.
 - An effective audit and budget committee chosen from membership of both houses.
 - Rigid integrity rules which candidates would, by law, have to follow. And, list their own and family wealth and holdings when elected.
- The UDP gives its own view of various independent candidates saying:
1. "Hipolito Bautista and his few remaining followers of We the People claim he is the most experienced and mature candidate for the position."
 2. "Paul Morgan of VIP claims he is the most appealing and politically successful so far."
 3. "Cornelius Dueck of the so-called National Reform Party believes he is entitled to it because he will be spending and raising most of the money."
 4. "Meanwhile, others are contending that Will Maheia, who claims to be setting up his own party, is the only potential leader who can unify the various

rival elements."

And they go on: "At the level of Deputy Leadership, a fight just as ferocious is underway between Patrick Rogers, who claims he is qualified to be leader but is prepared to settle for Deputy Leadership, Lucilo Teck (Hipolito's colleague from We the People) and Hubert Enriquez of VIP."

This is all good publicity for the independents and getting their names known. Better still, is the obvious discomfort the UDP expresses with its snide: "Imagine, the people who claim we need a new political party because the two established parties have become too powerful, cannot even get off the ground because they are fighting for power.The UDP, by contrast, has no confusion about who its leader is and who will become Prime Minister when the party wins. Honourable Dean Barrow is the undisputed Leader. He is the most experienced, the most successful at the polls and the most

committed to reform and stamping out corruption."

Well! Many of us wish he would stand up and say he would support an elected senate, would support a Land Distribution Act giving power to the people, revise the 'General Revenue' honey pot and pledge punishment for all blatant transgressions of the law carried out by PUP ministers and cronies.

It is wishful thinking when the Guardian reports: "When The Guardian raised the question a few weeks ago about who would lead a possible third party and whether any such person would be a credible choice for Prime Minister, it threw proponents of the third party theory into crisis."

The Guardian is, perhaps deliberately, missing The point. It only needs ten true men; stalwart in action, independent in hope and united in expectation to topple the long entrenched power of both PUP AND UDP.

Comments?

Suggestions?or want

to share your thoughts

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Apocalypto: Good Drama, Bad History

The Maya didn't wipe out the forest and cause their civilization to collapse, prominent Mayanist asserts

By: Dr. Anabel Ford

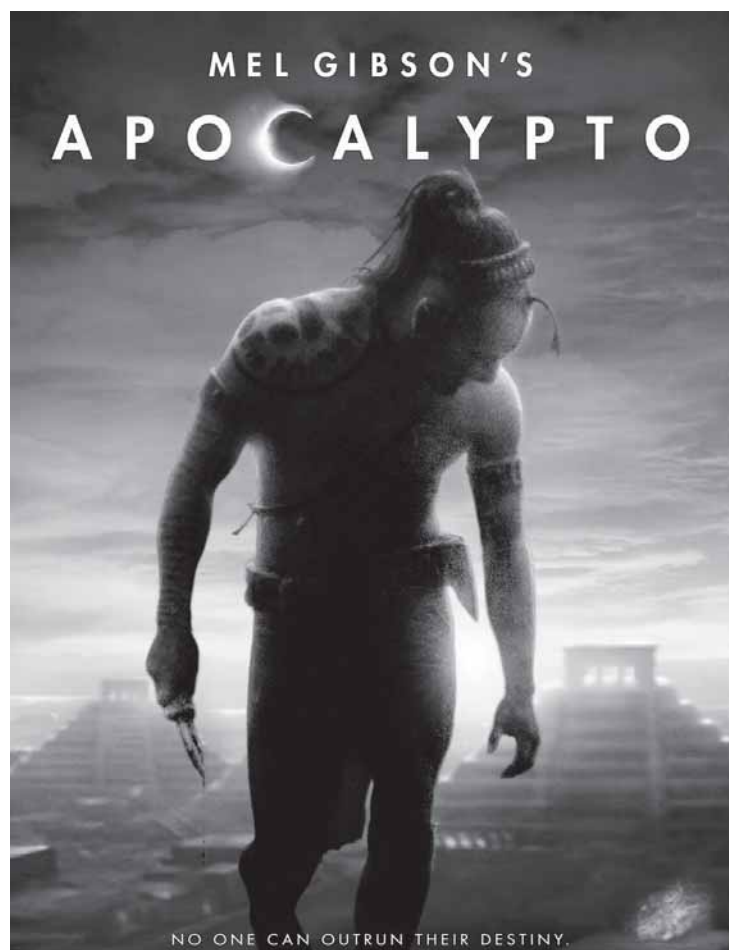
Santa Barbara—Mel Gibson's *Apocalypto* presents the commonly held tragic view of the Maya collapse. Despite their beautiful art, monumental architecture, and highly developed forms of government, astronomy, and mathematics, the film says the Maya never learned to farm. Instead they slashed and burned, and by the time of their peak, their population had become too dense, their network of cities too crowded and reliant on non-sustainable agriculture to survive. Though other factors may have played a part—including a hard drought and a possible epidemic—the film boldly asserts that the chief reason for the Maya collapse was their poor ecological stewardship.

"Not so," says leading Mayanist, Dr. Anabel Ford, a vibrant UCSB archeologist and President of Exploring Solutions Past: the Maya Forest Alliance (ESP Maya), a non-profit organization, known for her work in the Maya rainforest, 6-million-acres that span parts of Mexico, Guatemala, and Belize.

Ford does not believe that the Maya "collapsed" because there were too many of them and they were too greedy, warlike, and crude in the way they cultivated their land.

"In fact, they were excellent stewards of the rainforest, and their practices can help us think productively about sustainable ecology in the age of globalization and climate change," she insists.

Ford's conclusions—which she stresses are based on interdisciplinary study, not archeology alone—are presented in the forthcoming article "Agriculture and Landscape in the Maya



Forest," available prior to publication via email by request.

"You can't blame the misconception on Mel Gibson, though," Ford added. "The view of the Maya as ecologically self-destructive is entrenched. Even the geographer Jared Diamond used it in 'Collapse,' his bestselling book about the ways societies bring about their own destruction."

Ford, who has spent 30 years studying the Maya, is not convinced. The bedrock of her skepticism—and her article—is a simple fact, one she believes holds profound implications: that the modern Maya forest is human-influenced.

"Ninety percent of the [surviving]

dominant species are still useful," Ford said "The forest is feral, not original, and still wears its human mark, as if the Mayas' ancient gardens abandoned at the Spanish conquest have gone wild."

Such astonishing ecological coherence could not have been possible if the Maya had been destructive farmers. Indeed, the opposite must be true: the Maya must have been exceptionally attuned and responsive to their environment if they managed to have

such a lasting, all-encompassing effect on the still populate the jungles of Mesoamerica still follow good practices, but they are being supplanted by immigrants who see the forest as an economic opportunity to be clear-cut for profitable crops or livestock.

"The Maya forest gardeners have the secret to balancing cultural prosperity with ecological preservation—and they are dying out," she said.

Ford believes the best way to preserve the rainforest is to encourage and cultivate the traditional techniques still used by Maya forest farmers today. These are receding—along with its people—into the jungle.

She hopes to demonstrate the importance of these practices at the newly created El Pilar Archaeological Reserve for Maya Flora and Fauna, a 5,000-acre slice of rainforest in Western Belize. El Pilar has extensive Maya monuments, which Ford believes should be only partially exposed to preserve the

(Please Turn To Page 11)

Greetings from the **Belmopan Mental Health Consumer Association**
orlandopulido@gmail.com Tuesday, 05 December 2006

Dear Friends of Mental Health in Belize and Around the World,

We bring you greetings from the **Belmopan Mental Health Consumer Association** **BMHCA**, the major actor for consumers in the Central American Nation of Belize. Since our founding at the Banana Bank Lodge in 2004 we have been toiling in the interest of those who have undergone the trauma of mental illness. This year was, once again, a momentous year for all consumers in Belize; albeit with some challenges.

We celebrated the second year that the Government of Belize has been financing the supply of the most advanced Second Generation Anti-psychotic medications for the treatment of a gamut of mental disorders in Belize. We view this as a remarkable achievement, because these medications bring very little side effects and as a result convert consumers into catalysts for the national development process. It was through the former Minister of Health the Hon. Vildo Marin, now Minister of Agriculture, that these Atypicals became available to all Consumers in Belize. The Ministry of Health remained opened to us this year with a willingness to listen to our request—for these medications to remain available for all consumers in years to come. The private sector also was very helpful this year with the Social Security Board making some major renovations at the Rockview Hospital. We salute Scotiabank for funding the beautification of the Psychiatric Wing at the Western Regional Hospital. And to all consumers whose contributions have made the **BMHCA** a viable NGO. Lastly to Dr. Claudina Cayetano, Director of Mental Health Programs and all Psychiatric Nurses-- for keeping Consumers sparkling and in fine tune.

The **Belmopan Mental Health Consumer Association** will be holding a Christmas Party on Wednesday, **December 20, 06** between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. The party will be held within the Psychiatric Unit at the Western Regional Hospital in Belmopan. We plan to have much entertainment during those five hours together. Nurse Marion Casey, will be the contact person for the party at 822-2263/22-2264.



Nurse Marion Casey, centre right, our power grid during 2004-2006.



Dr. Claudina Cayetano, far Left, our Lithium Ion powered battery.



Dr. Anabel Ford with a Maya forest gardener at El Pilar, 2006.

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

Counting instead of shooting, the Audubon Society's Christmas Bird Count

Dr. Lee Jones talks with Independent Weekly's Toledo Correspondent William Schmidt



Schmidt: What is the purpose of the count?

Dr. Jones: The original purpose in 1900 was to provide an alternative to the Christmas Day Hunt, a traditional competition to see how many different bird species could be shot in a day. Since then, the Christmas Bird Count data has been used in a number of different ways by scientists to examine long term early winter population trends, which reflects habitat alteration and long term climate cycles. Christmas bird count data can also reflect short term effects. For example in it's second year 2001, the PG Bird Count recorded by far its highest number of species to date, 267 species, Hurricane Iris struck in October of that year and caused major destruction of the habitat north of PG to Dangriga. As a result many birds were forced to move south to areas where they don't normally occur.

Schmidt: I understand you started the PG Bird Count...



Birding is increasingly popular with visitors to Belize

Dr. Jones: Yes, I did along with Philip Balderamos in 2000. It's the fourth of what we hope will be six counts, one for each district in Belize.

Schmidt: How does our count compare with other districts?

Dr. Jones: We have always had the highest number of different species, not only in Belize but in all of North and Central America north of Costa Rica.

Schmidt: What are the other three districts?

Dr. Jones: Belize District was the first, then Belmopan for Cayo, then Gallon Jug for Orange Walk.

Schmidt: Why is it called the Punta Gorda Bird Count and not the Toledo District Bird Count?

Dr. Jones: It started in 1900 in the United States of America, and has

generally been named for the town or prominent feature of the area. It encompasses a diameter of 15 miles. So it is a relatively small part of Toledo. It's northern boundary is Big Falls, the western part is the Aguacaliente Wildlife Preserve. Cattle Landing, Orange Point and Boom Creek are the southern and eastern limits.

Schmidt: When is it?

Dr. Jones: For Toledo it's always on a Wednesday between the 14th & 20th of December.

This year it will be the 20th.

Schmidt: Where will it begin?

Dr. Jones: We meet the evening before, Tuesday, at the Sea Front Inn at 7:00 pm. We assign areas, pass out the check list forms, instructions, and work out transportation. It begins before dawn on Wednesday morning and ends at dusk around 5:45 to 6:00 pm, followed by a complementary compilation dinner served at 6:30 pm.

Schmidt: Can anyone participate?

Dr. Jones: We encourage tourist guides and students, after all, birds are one of Belize's greatest tourist attractions. Despite its usefulness for scientific studies, a major objective is for like minded people who are interested in nature to get together for an enjoyable day in the field counting birds.

Jungle Walk

The Toucan Bird

The toucan is one of Belize's most recognized and beloved birds. It's no wonder! It is colorful friendly and inspires its share of pride in all the wonders of the rainforest. Independent Weekly would like to thank Katie Stevens for the following excerpt from her popular field guide, *Jungle Walk*.

The toucan is a specialty of tropical America. In Belize, the keel-billed toucan (*Ramphastos sulfuratus*) has been designated the national bird in honor of its hilarious beauty.

When you envisage the outsized, capsized canoe—in rainbow hues—which is the astonishing beak of the toucan, its hard to imagine that the bird to which it is attached could ever manage to hoist it high up into the air, much less use it with dexterity for picking and cutting fruit—then as a chute down which the food is spilled into its gullet.



This beak is an amazing feat of structural engineering. The horny outer shell is reinforced with a network of inner cellular fibers, providing strength without debilitating weight; it feels like laminated balsa wood, but the serrated edges are more mindful of a stainless steel pairing knife.

The coloration is beyond belief: apple green, with an elongated triangle laid out along the lip of the upper beak and a streak of powder

blue wisping across the lower beak, the entire tip dipped in carmine and the whole then varnished in satin matte. It is attached to the toucan's head by a black, patent leather strap. Science speculates that this gaudy display intimidates potential foe, but perhaps it simply bedazzles them, riveting them to the spot while the toucan decides its best escape route.

Featherwise, this black bird wears a perfect bib of lemon yellow and, beneath its tail, a flash of caladium red. Greenish skin rings its eyes. And, after all this and all that, its legs and feet are, unbelievably in iridescent blue. All things considered, the keel-billed toucan is simply not possible!

The toucan generally feeds on the fruits of large forest trees. With its beak, it rips off a chunk from the fleshy portion; it juggles the morsel with the tip of its bill until it is positioned just so and then, with a toss of its head, it flips the food into the air and catches it

somewhere en route to its throat. It drinks water in a similar fashion, dipping its bill below the surface, then lifting it high, making of it a gutter to conduct the liquid down. Toucans also eat insects, lizards and snakes, and have been known to help themselves to oropendola eggs.

This bird prefers large trees in open areas. It nests in holes such as those made by woodpeckers and which it will enlarge by removing dead wood—but only enough so that it can fit comfortably when folded up, its bill down its back and its tail hinged forward. Two to four eggs are laid. The parents take turns with the incubating as well as with the task of filling the baby birds. The nesting stage is prolonged, lasting up to nine weeks.

The social birds may flock, in groups of six to eight and often hold forth in monotonous creaking croak. At the Belize Zoo, Rambo, (originally Rainbow) in the right mood, will “purr” for you while you scratch his head.

The other species of toucan found in Belize are the collared aracari (*Pteroglossus torquatus*) and the emerald toucanet (*Aulacorhynchus prasinus*).

Social Page

SPECTARTE - ART GALLERY OPENING IN PLACENCIA

By Agnes Copperfield

At a celebratory soiree, attended by friends, invited guests and participating artists, on December 9th, 4-8 pm, Jenny J. Wildman officially opened her Maya Beach (Placencia Peninsula, Stann Creek District) art gallery, Spectarte.

Many will know Jenny as realtor/developer and also former hotelier (Don Quixote and Adventure Inn, both of Consejo Shores, Corozal District), - she is also a multi-media artist herself. Her passion has always been art, and cultural preservation in Belize. All of the art objects in Spectarte are produced in Belize. Since taking the final leap to realize her longtime ambition of gallery proprietorship, Jenny has been combing the country, collecting the fine and the unusual, and also commissioning and encouraging artists toward products now found in Spectarte.

In the gallery's veranda one finds a summary of Spectarte's offerings painted on the wall: "Belizean Artists - originals, antiques, furnishings, fabrics, carvings, custom orders, murals, doo-dahs, art by



Guests from around the Peninsula attended the opening.

nature, baskets, forums, etc." Inside, one will find treasures such as "The Almost Bride", "The Cockscomb King", "Boys in a Dory", "Morning Market", "Mayan Mama" - all original paintings. Also, hand-carved rosewood benches, one of a kind

carved/painted chests, the largest jiffy-jaffa baskets this writer has ever seen, unique and individually designed soapstone tiles, hand-painted silk scarves, silk quilts, Raku ceramics - some assembled into table lamps, all combined to startle the guests with the breadth and quality of the works under one roof.

Starting on January 14th, every Sunday Spectarte will host a different forum event where selected craftspeople will be demonstrating and selling their products on the grounds, along with many capricious cultural performances of musicians, mayan music garifuna drummers, et al.

Spectarte is open Thursday through Sunday, from 10 am to 6 pm, and by appointment. Phones are 523-8019 and 614-1043. Jenny or her assistant manager, Felipe Zetina (raku ceramist) will be waiting.



Interior of the gallery



A diverse collection of artworks is on display

Visit The Belize Zoo

The Best Little Zoo In The World

Apocalypto: Good Drama, Bad History

➡ (Continued From Page 10)

crumbling limestone that makes up their core. She is determined to combine excavation and limited exposure with a return to Maya farming techniques, making El Pilar a monument to the past and a model for the future.

Ford believes the distortions of Apocalypto can be counteracted by advancing the truth revealed at El Pilar, and by encouraging the burgeoning sustainable-tourism industry now prevalent not only in Belize and Guatemala, but across

the globe.

"People see how important ecology is," Ford said, "how inseparable human activity is from the natural world. We're trying to reconcile the two," She hopes El Pilar—and knowledge of the Maya in general—will provide an example, one that people will visit and remember when considering the broader ecological issues now facing us.

Website addresses for El Pilar and other useful sites--

<http://marc.ucsb.edu/elpilar/index.html>

<http://www.espmaya.org/>

Congratulations to our 2006 Regional Unsung Heroes

They have committed their lives and sacrificed unconditionally to help others. They make our communities and countries a better place.



Jestina Charles (centre) – 2006 Regional Unsung Hero

Jestina Charles – 2006 Regional Unsung Hero
Mrs. Jestina Charles has worn many “hats” in her lifetime – theologian, teacher, counsellor, seamstress, homemaker and foster mother. These have amounted to more than 50 years of dedicating her life to helping people. She has motivated and taught children, young adults and the elderly. Her many years of teaching at various primary schools in St. Vincent resulted in her being known affectionately as “Missy”.

She is also renowned for her assistance to the elderly and for administering feeding programmes for over 30 years. A feeding programme she started, known as the “Love Table”, has to date provided assistance to 25 elderly persons. This effort evolved into the creation of the Bethel Care programme, dedicated to enriching the lives of the elderly through craft and exercises. Ill health as a result of a stroke in 2004 does not prevent her from continuing to give selflessly of her time every day to the disadvantaged and underprivileged in St. Vincent.



Laura Collymore – 2006 Regional Unsung Heroes Runner-up (St. Lucia)

Laura Collymore – 2006 Regional Unsung Heroes Runner-up (St. Lucia)
Laura Collymore is a retired school teacher, mentor, counsellor, caregiver, town clerk and humanitarian who has been actively serving the fishing village of Laborie and its environs, including the communities of Banse La Grace and McDiamed, for the past 30 years. Her work includes establishment of a craft centre for unemployed youth in 1979. She also has a passion and vocation for the elderly that is demonstrated by her commitment to distribute food, medicine, and clothing to the aged. She has also been instrumental in the provision of electricity and the renovation of dilapidated homes of the elderly in the community. She is a founding member of Club 60, a group devoted to supporting the elderly by engaging them in activities.



Marvin Finlayson – 2006 Regional Unsung Heroes Runner-Up (The Bahamas)

Marvin Finlayson – 2006 Regional Unsung Heroes Runner-Up (The Bahamas)
Every day for the past 15 years, Marvin Finlayson has devoted his life to reaching out to the hearing impaired, and erasing the obstacles to creating equal opportunities for them. At the tender age of six, he took ill with a bout of meningitis that left him deaf. Determined not to be marginalised because of poor verbal communication skills, he became the first deaf person to graduate from the College of the Bahamas. Marvin has excellent speech, lip-reading and writing skills and is fluent in sign language. He is one of the founding members of the Bahamas Deaf Sports Association, which represents the interests and activities of deaf athletes both locally and internationally.



Fabian Mitchell – 2006 Regional Unsung Heroes Runner-Up (Jamaica) Special Commendation

Fabian Mitchell – 2006 Regional Unsung Heroes Runner-Up (Jamaica) Special Commendation
Thirty-four-year-old Fabian Mitchell is living testimony that hope is alive and well with the youth in our region. He has been involved in community activities since childhood. One of Fabian’s most significant achievements has been the establishment of the Cross Roads Foundation in July 2001. The Foundation is a member of the umbrella organisation PACT – People’s Action for Community Transformation. His love for the youth coupled with his desire for change that will have a positive effect on the society resulted in his decision to work voluntarily for three and a half years in the inner-city communities of Kingston. He also started a remedial programme for street boys in the Jones Town community that became a model for a similar programme in the city’s South Side community.

- Anguilla
- Antigua & Barbuda
- The Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- British Virgin Islands
- The Cayman Islands
- Curaçao
- Dominica
- Grenada & Carriacou
- Jamaica
- The Netherlands Antilles
- St. Kitts & Nevis
- St. Lucia
- St. Vincent & the Grenadines
- Trinidad & Tobago
- Turks & Caicos Islands

FirstCaribbean is proud to honour these Unsung Heroes and to support the various causes to which they have so selflessly dedicated their lives.

www.firstcaribbeanbank.com

Placencia Fisherman receives Conservation Award

The Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute (GCFI) presented the third annual Gladding Memorial Award for commercial fishing conservation leadership to Mr. Carlton Young of Placencia, Belize and Mr. Ceylon Clayton of Little Bay, Jamaica, during its 59th Annual Meeting in November in Belize City, Belize.

Mr. Young is one of the wise elders of the fishing industry in Belize. As Chairman of the Placencia Fishermen Co-operative, and through his membership on the Fisheries Advisory Board of the Friends of Nature and the Glover's Reef Advisory Committee, he has long advocated for the protection of grouper spawning sites and responsible long-term commercial fisheries management.

"Honoring exceptional conservation leaders within the industry encourages best practices for the benefit of the resources and the fishermen", stated Dr. Ken Lindeman, Senior Scientist with Environmental Defense (www.environmentaldefense.org).

Mr. Clayton is an outstanding community leader, professional fisherman and founding father of the Negril Marine Park, having been a dedicated volunteer with the Negril Coral Reef Preservation Society since its inception in 1990. He has served



Proud recipient posing with his award (Photo courtesy of Placencia Fishing Coop.)

on the Board of Directors since 1997 and is affiliated with the Negril Environmental Protection Trust and many other conservation organizations.

"These winners represent the best in responsible fishing in the Greater Caribbean and we are extremely pleased with the overwhelming interest in this initiative from all stakeholder groups in the region", stated Bob Glazer, GCFI

Executive Director.

The Gladding Memorial Award, established in 2004 by the GCFI Board of Directors, with major support from Environmental Defense and the Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary, is named for the prominent Florida commercial fisherman, Peter Gladding, whose vision and actions towards responsible fisheries management helped establish the landmark Tortugas

Ecological Reserve in the Florida Keys. Any commercial fisher in the Caribbean region, Florida, and Gulf

of Mexico is eligible for the award which supports attendance at the annual GCFI meeting. Prior recipients have come from Florida,

Barbados, Belize and Colombia. The Gulf and Caribbean Fisheries Institute, founded in 1947, provides information exchange among governmental, non-governmental, academic and commercial users of marine resources, primarily through its annual meeting, which reaches members from 80 countries worldwide in the form of its published proceedings. Further information and available publications may be obtained at www.gcfi.org.

Environmental Defense, a leading national nonprofit organization, represents more than 400,000 members. Since 1967, Environmental Defense has linked science, economics, law and innovative private-sector partnerships to create breakthrough solutions to the most serious environmental problems.

Email your digital photograph for the Social Page to independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com

Hunt for good food

With Anthony Hunt



Mickey's

Northern Hwy, Belize City

This quaint little hangout not only has some of the cheapest and coldest beer in town, but the panades are truly done with the most TLC this reviewer has ever seen. We were told by the owner that he only uses Blacktip Shark for the Panades or else he doesn't make them. Now that is a standard! If sharks are in short supply though, feel free to try the Conch Fritters when in season or the Garnaches and Salbutes. While other fare such as rice and beans are available it is the panades that make this stop on the Northern Highway bustle on a Friday evening, and if you see any politicians there (as you will), just grin and say hello...\$5-\$9. Dinner and Drinking only.

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



ARIES
(Mar. 21- April 20)\
Be honest if you wish to solve the problem. Your interest in religion and philosophy may lead you to specific destinations. You should regain some of your self esteem if you get involved in organizational functions.

TAURUS
(Apr. 21- may 21)
You need time to rejuvenate. Don’t make any unreasonable promises. You can make headway if you share your intentions with someone you care about.

GEMINI
(May 22-June 21)
Don’t let your anger consume you and don’t allow important matters go unattended to. Problems with your mate will develop if you don’t let them have their way. Do things that involve children.

CANCER
(June 22-July 22)
You’ll find love and you’ll get into tiptop shape at the same time. You will probably have to defend your mate. Your personal life will be under the gun and you may want to avoid the questions your lover is going to want to ask you.

LEO
(July 23-Aug 22)
If you’ve been really busy, try to schedule some time to spend with loved ones. Not everything you hear will be legitimate. Children could cost you more than you can afford.

VIRGO
(Aug. 23 -Sept. 23)
Travel for business purposes may bring the highest returns. Your best efforts will come through making changes in your home. Get involved in worthwhile endeavors and meet

new friends.
LIBRA
(Sept. 24 -Oct. 23)
You can make changes to your home that will be pleasing to all concerned. Pamper yourself; you deserve it. You can meet potential new mates if you socialize with friends.

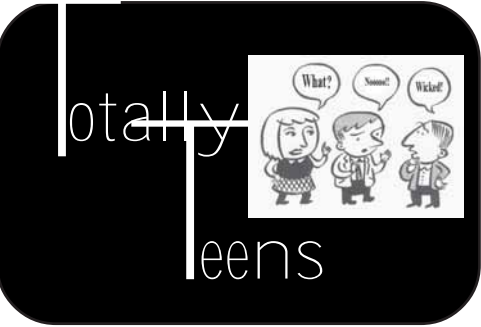
SCORPIO
(Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)
You will be in the mood for competition, and your ability to lead a group will bring you popularity. Try to be reasonable. You may want to make changes in your home environment.

SAGITTARIUS
(Nov. 23 -Dec. 21)
Opportunities to meet new lovers will I come through pleasure trips or social events. Mingle with individuals who are established and can give you some serious insight into business and future trends. Don’t be too quick to sign documents.

CAPRICORN
(Dec 22.- Jan. 20)
Your high energy must be directed into productive goals, or frustrations will occur. Colleagues may try to undermine you. Your positive attitude and intellectual outlook will draw others to you.

AQUARIUS
(Jan. 21 -Feb. 19)
Your leadership qualities will come in handy. Think twice before you speak. You will be able to get good advice if you listen to close friends or relatives you respect.

PISCES
(Feb. 20-Mar. 20)
Make changes to your home that will be pleasing to everyone involved. Joining organizations will provide you with stimulating romantic contacts. You will be extremely receptive to new and progressive methods at work.



Well could you imagine? Adults selling beer to children! I don’t need to imagine, I’ve seen it. I gat WA story Fe tell uno: my mother and I were in a grocery store on Saturday afternoon and there was a cute boy in there about 10 or 11. We caught eye contact every now and again. Anyway we got to the checkout and he was in front of us and there was a lady in front of him. She was holding up the line, buying lotto tickets, and arguing about her numbers. It was because of her I noticed the boy had a birthday bag and 4 beers. A lot of people were getting impatient. I guess they wanted Lotto tickets or beers too, one guy seemed kinda drunk. Finally, after a long time back and forth with the store owner, the lady left with her tickets. The shop owner just rang up the beers— no questions asked! After that we paid and were on our way home when I brought it to my mother’s attention. She had not noticed because there was so much distraction with the lotto tickets and other people in line.
Come to think of it, it was not the first time I saw this. I always see children buying alcohol and cigarettes. As a teen at my age (13) I am ashamed of this. I also noticed that if a child is all dressed up and with clean clothes and goes up to the counter with alcohol they will ask you

KIDS AND BEER

a lot of questions and probably tell you to put it back. But if a child dresses like a ragamuffin, they will sell the alcohol. What really kills me is the fact that if a child comes in and gives you more money than the selling price they will get it to you because they want the money.
Don’t the shop keepers know it is against the law ? What if the child’s parents catches them with it? Don’t you think they will ask them where they got and from who? Who sold it to them? And they will go to the store and rail up and bring it to the police’s attention. They also we probably charge a lot a lot a lot a lot a lot a lot (x 10) a lot of money .So what is the point ? What I am trying to say here is.....DON’T DO IT!!!!!! It is totally wrong, ok? So do me a favor the next time you go out , look around you might see it happen.
Julia Heusner.

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

Looking for your copy of Independent Reformer Weekly?

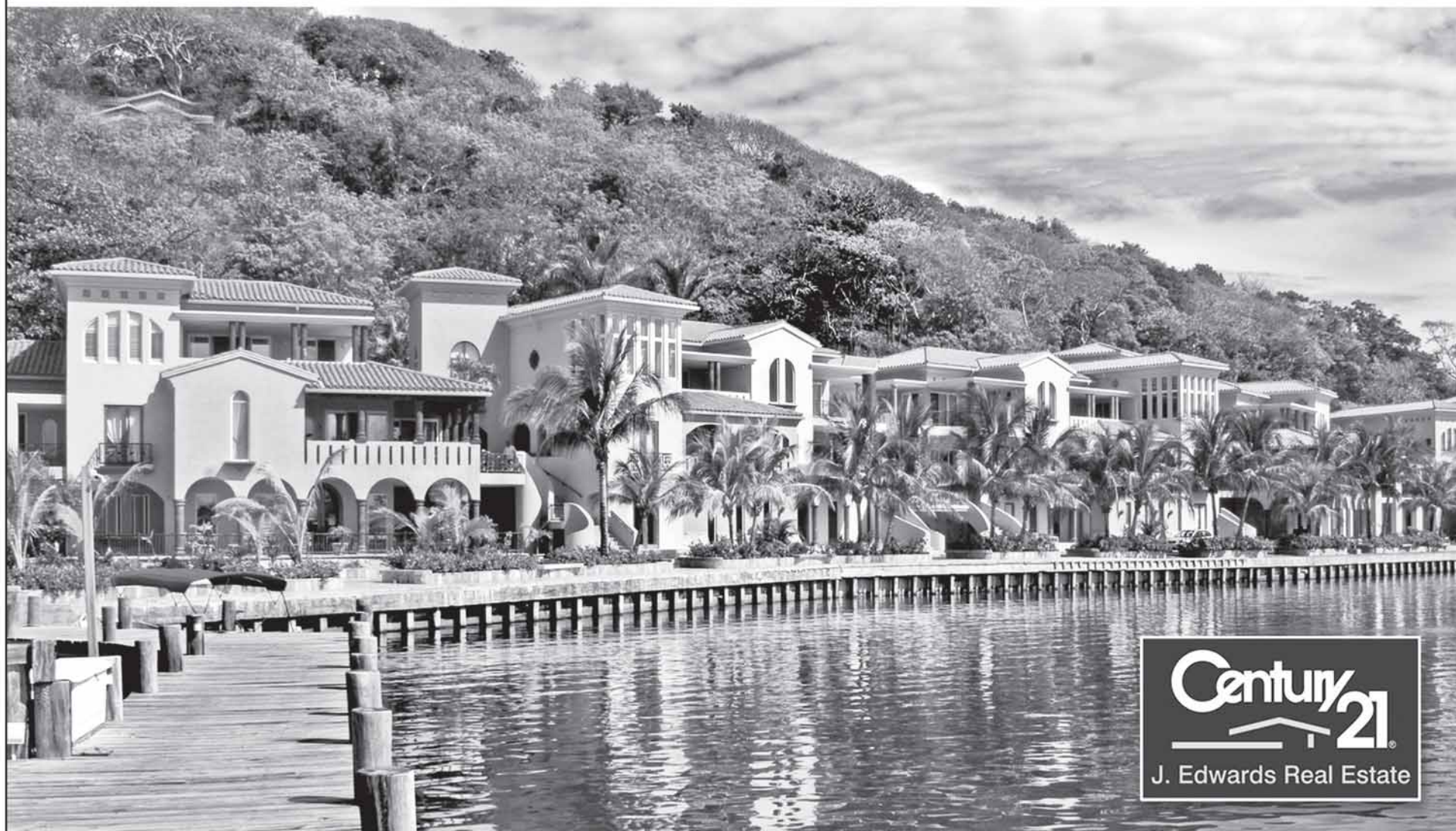
We currently have the following distributors Countrywide and are looking for more:

- Corozal:
Raidys
- Orange Walk:
Peoples Store
- Cayo:
Evas Café, Celinas and street vendors
- Dangriga:
Oscar Ramirez
- Placencia:
Noldan Brown
- Punta Gorda:
Natures Way Guest House
- Caye Caulker:
Trends
- Belmopan:
Hyde’s Mini Mart and Dakers Stationery
- Belize City:
Albert & Queen Street Stalls, Twin Supermarket and Slingshot on St. Thomas Street, Alpha Drug Store (Freetown Road)
- Ladyville:
El Ca’s Supermarket, Jonze Salon, Celinas Grocery, Highwayman Service Station, Celina’s, Airport
- San Pedro:
seeking a distributor

New Distributors are being added every week so look out for increased availability. You can also join our mailing list, see page 2 for details.

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