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Reformer for the People

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How We Are Governed

A democratic peaceful demonstration degenerated into a riot at the instigation of the Police Riot Squad in Belmopan last Friday when the Belizean electorate turned out en masse to say an emphatic “NO” to the Musa administration’s proposed \$33 million bailout of Universal Health Services debt to Belize Bank.

They came by the busloads from every corner of the country – from the cane fields of Corozal and Orange Walk, the rice paddies of the Belize and Toledo districts, the citrus and banana orchards and aquaculture farms of the Stann Creek district, the fishing communities of the coast and the islands. The protestors included not only the Belizean workers who toil for their daily bread under the sun and their spouses and children, but also teachers, educated professionals, public servants and independent businessmen.

The protesting groups were clearly defined and colour-coded by their t-shirts. There was the massive crowd of red-shirted supporters of the United Democratic Party, the members of the National Trade Union Congress of Belize in their yellow shirts with the NTUCB crest on their left breast, the members of the Public Service Union in their grey shirts, the Vision Inspired by the People (VIP) Party in yellow T-



Deja-vu at Independence Plaza, but this time the Police Riot Squad reloads rubber bullets to fire at citizens.

shirts, the National Reform Party in their orange shirts, and many more VIP supporters who demonstrated their affiliation by wearing some splash of yellow, a cap, a scarf, a yellow-striped shirt or skirt or even a yellow umbrella.

Their banners all voiced their disapproval of the PUP administration’s poli-

cies: “Stop Punish the Poor”, “Musa the People no want You, Resign Now!”, “Da weh Musa di smoke?”, “Enough is Enough”, or simply “NO.” Others avoided an epithet by a transposition of letters to produce a message reminiscent of the 60’s Black civil rights movement - “Muck Fusa”, but the message

was clear.

This was not the demonstration of a few thousand UDP supporters and union members who had protested the Musa 2005 budget in January 2005. The crowd of protestors, over ten thousand strong, stretched out in a sea of faces from the chain barrier placed by the police at the foot of the steps to the National Assembly out across Independence Plaza all the way to the Belmopan police station and Post Office.

Some had brought bull-horns from which they voiced their arguments and dissent to the audience, even though for the most part they were preaching to the converted. On the other side of the barrier and barbed wire barricades strung by the police, stood the grey-shirt clad, crew-cut raw recruits of the Belize Police Academy, who stood with stony expressions worthy of the Buckingham Palace guards. They listened in stolid silence, knowing full well the truth beneath the protestors’ diatribe, that there would be no pay raise for them next year or for years to come if this latest financial boondoggle went through.

Despite their obvious anger, the demonstrators remained peaceful and orderly and only roused to an excited cheer whenever any opposition mem-



These women braved the heat to make their views known.

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Letters to the Editor

Editorial Director

Meb Cutlack

Editor

Karla Heusner Vernon

General Manager

Trevor Vernon

Design/Layout

William G. Ysaguirre

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Company Ltd.

P.O. Box 2666

Telephones:

(501) 225-3520

Email:

independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com

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Proposed port makes waves in San Pedro

Dear Editor,

The word came as a shock. There's going to be a new, privately-owned port in San Pedro Town. It's going to be built in a residential area on the south side of the Island. The road that the trucks with their containers will have to travel past homes within 30 or 40 feet of the road. Stretches of the road are virtually impassable during the rainy season, now. The same roads are "dust bowls" from normal traffic during the dry season. When the new cobblestone road is completed from the water plant northward, we will see unprecedented use by the ever-present incredibly large dump trucks and now we're going to add 20 foot and 40 foot containers with their tractors to the mix? Surely, the powers that have reportedly approved this project have little or no expertise in this type of engineering or little or no regard for the residents, the environment and the future of Ambergris Caye or we would not be faced with a situation with "disaster" written all over it.

Let's look at the situation as it is, right now. Work has proceeded and critical mangrove has already been cut from the road to the sea. Was a permit obtained? We don't know, but we trust someone in government can tell us. A rock roadway has been started to allow a large mechanical shovel to operate.

Will the reef, Hol Chan and Shark Ray Alley be affected by the ebb and flow of the currents and potential silting that is bound to occur in the coming years? This property faces these valuable and protected sites. Are they really going to be protected from potential accidental oil or chemical spills from barges carrying a vast array of items for construc-

tion and many industries?

Aside from the multiple environmental issues, we have a thriving tourism industry that supports thousands of people on this island. Do we think that a working port with the potential for many barges to be in the process of unloading or loading on our beachfront is the sight we want to greet our guests? Most destinations work very hard at locating their ports and industrial buildings "out of sight". Will literally thousands of residents and guests be awakened to the sounds of large trucks passing their homes or rooms at 5:00 a.m. or 11:00 p.m.? Or, will the barge industry suddenly enact rigid schedules for their loading, unloading and trucking for this new site?

They haven't seen fit to do this at the current piers being utilized. The Government of Belize (and by extension, the citizens of this country) built a new marina/port on the back side of the island at substantial expense. There have been up to 4 barges there at one time but we hear cries that with that many you can't turn one around. Has anyone ever heard of scheduling? This location also is accessed by a road to the back that bypasses many, but not all, residential areas but it won't have to travel a substantial amount of the new cobblestone road. While the people have had to bear the cost of this marina/port, we will now have to bear the many additional costs associated with the need for better roads and maintenance if the new port proceeds. For a country with too little income and a multitude of needs, this looks like the wrong project at the wrong time and for all the wrong reasons.

We look forward to the opportunity to speak to government officials about this ill-conceived project and participate

in a search for a solution that not only contributes to the protection of all our natural beauty and resources, but also is both citizen and visitor friendly. There is little or no doubt that win-win solutions are usually the best solutions for all.

Respectfully,

South Ambergris Caye Neighborhood Watch Association

Cc: Major Jones, Belize port authority
Mr. Martin Alegria, Department of the Environment

Mr. Craig Moore, Geology Department
Mr. Wilbur Sabido, Forestry Department

Hon. Elsa Paz, Mayoress, San Pedro Town

Hon. Manuel Heredia, Jr., Area Representative

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Has Mind Guru's teaching paid off in Giant Oil Strike?

By: Enda Leahy

WAS it a case of mind over matter? A tiny company set up by two Irish women and three geologists in 2002 has struck oil in Belize, with the help of controversial lifestyle guru Tony Quinn.

Succeeding where multibillion dollar corporations had failed, the company has found commercial quantities of high-quality crude in the small Central American state, population 290,000. They claim their success was partly due to a mind-training course from Quinn.

Belize Natural Energy (BNE), backed by American and Irish investors, claims to have found so much oil that the Belize government reckons its 7.5% cut from the discovery will pay the entire national budget for a year.

A succession of oil majors quit the country in disappointment after failing to find a gusher, but BNE scored three times in its first three attempts, and the government believes it could soon be producing 20,000 barrels of oil per day (bpd).

Enniskillen-born Sheila McCaffrey, a



Natural Resources Minister Johnny Briceno (center) & BNE executives inspect Belize's first production oil well, Usher I.

director of BNE, said the company's success was not pot luck. "Seven years ago I trained with Tony Quinn; it was an absolute transformation. It completely changed my life and it's the only reason I'm in Belize today," she said last week.

"The history showed us that 50 companies failed spectacularly to find anything commercial, with a budget line from the 1950s to the 1990s of hundreds of millions of dollars."

Quinn's philosophy, which promotes

what he calls "mind technology", has been criticised as brainwashing but is defended by adherents as positive and life-changing.


Complaints about Quinn's techniques have come from the likes of Dialogue Ireland, a cult watchdog, which says seminars in the Bahamas costing €18,500 are proof of the "idiot effect" - "the phenomenon of entrepreneurs losing the plot and direction in life when they pay inflated prices for courses available for a few euros in a paperback".

McCaffrey and Belfast-born geologist Susan Morrice, who met working on oil and gas exploration projects in Ireland, set up the company with Mike Usher, a Belizean geologist who was convinced the country was oil-rich. They had financing from Morrice's husband, a Colorado oil executive, and more than 80 Irish investors.

Usher died suddenly in June 2004 but one year on BNE drilled its first hole, named Mike Usher 1 in his memory, and

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How We Are Governed

 (Continued From Page 1) ber of the House of Representatives appeared outside the national assembly. They were equally loud in their boos of disapproval when a PUP politico appeared. The crowd was ecstatic when the House broke for lunch and the opposition members came out to greet their supporters and shake hands across the barricade. The cheers were loudest when Opposition Leader Dean Barrow came out to meet the crowd a while later.

Despite the broiling heat, there was **total respect** for law and order. When

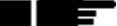
the Police observed via their television monitors that a cement tread of the steps had broken loose, they moved to remove this object which could be broken into missiles such as were hurled at the Police in 2005. Four senior officers in their spick and span khaki uniforms with braid crossed the barrier with an empty carton and moved among the crowd of protestors to the loose cement slab. The officers wore no helmets, and carried not so much as a baton, but they were unimpeded by the protestors as they picked up the pieces, placed them in the carton and carried them off. Such

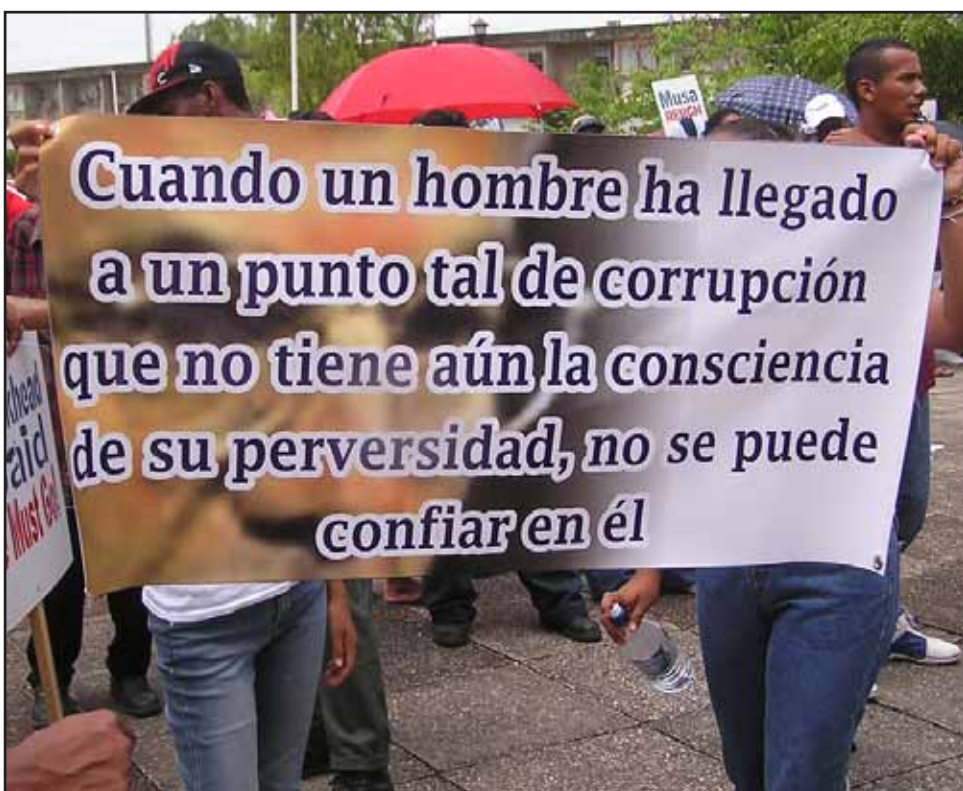


What chapter in crowd control is this, G Mike?!
(UDP campaign manager Karim Berges (center) seconds before he was lashed on the rear end with a baton.)

was the respect for law and order that no one even threatened to assault the officers.

The mood changed completely around 2:00 PM when the black-uniformed riot police showed up at the top of the hill in their black helmets, black armor and plastic shields. Those who remembered the event of January 2005 began throwing rocks, bottles, sticks from their protest placards, and the Police cadets beat a hasty retreat from this rain of missiles.

The Riot Squad advanced down the steps and began firing into the crowd of demonstrators. The people, some mothers carrying infants, retreated in haste to a safe distance, near the foot of the Independence monument. It was a scene reminiscent of Kent State University in 1970, when US national guardsmen opened fire on rock throwing students protesting the Vietnam War. Four students were killed at Kent State, but the Belize Police Riot Squad had
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translation: When a man has become so corrupt that he is longer aware of his perversity, he cannot be trusted."

Eye of the Hurricane



By: Karla Heusner Vernon

We do not have to go over the details of the clash between police and demonstrators in Belmopan; all of us saw or heard what happened, some way or another, thanks to the media. The whole thing came as no surprise. All of us knew it was coming, we had ample notice.

But just as officials in British Honduras refused to heed the warnings from abroad that a hurricane was headed towards our shores on September 10, 1931 and continued on with their official program of celebrations regardless of the risk to the public, so too our officials have refused to listen to the forecasts, so they continue on with the party. So too they ignore the danger to Belizeans.

What happened on Friday, May 18, 2007 was but the first lash of wind and water. We stand now in the eye, waiting for the second wave this coming Friday. Even if we make it through that, the tidal surge will follow. It has to; too much pressure has been building up.

never prosecuted for any alleged misdeeds.

Refugee status may be all he has to look forward to...IF he survives the storm surge. Physically speaking, not politically. He may think otherwise, but many believe he has gone too far, and

Fewer still may go next Friday. Or, what occurred may generate even greater numbers.

The leader of the Opposition may marshal more support, or change strategy, out-manoeuvre the Prime Minister this time. Even if he does not get a protest permit he can organize a countrywide business and school shut down, a national day of mourning with everyone wearing black...he, and we, have options.

Perhaps he will get the Speaker removed, or she, noting the public criticism about her knowledge of proper procedures and/or willingness to act on them, she will step aside, recuse herself, avoid further aspersions and insinuations about close relatives and/or PUP bias.

On Friday the Opposition did the people of Belize proud. Honorable Patrick Faber, spoke passionately on behalf of the people, at great personal risk to his status in the House. But his daring paid off; there was no punishment and he is one Area Representative who does not have to worry about letting down his division.

What will the others do when called to account to their constituents? It is perhaps easier for the UDP than the (Please Turn To Page 12)

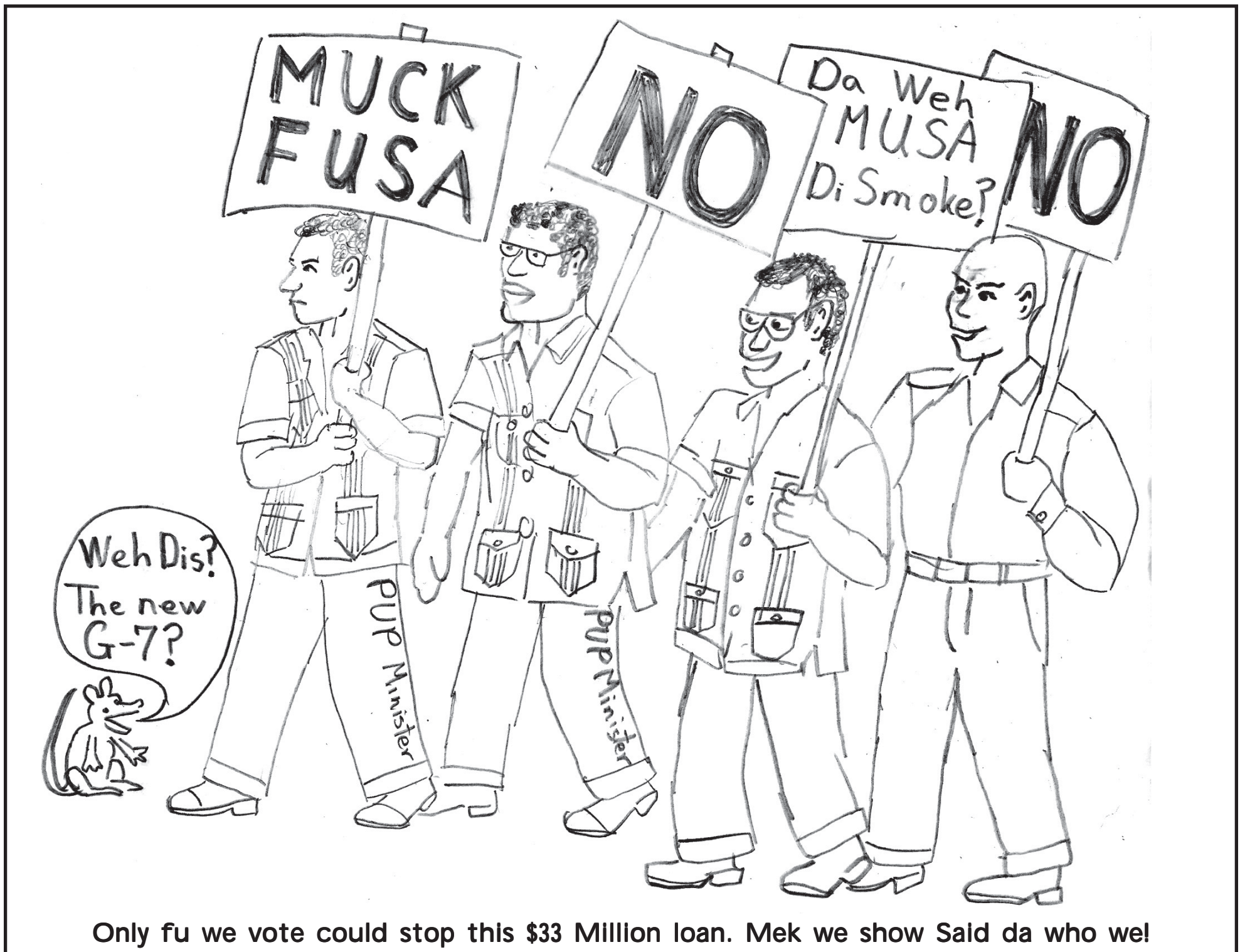
The leader of the Opposition may marshal more support, or change strategy, out-manoeuvre the Prime Minister this time.

The people's emotions, and tendency to violence, are being stirred up by the arrogant and disdainful attitude of the Prime Minister himself. Many cannot figure out if he is honestly losing his mind, or trying to instigate violence on purpose to earn the support of foreign powers, or so he can seek asylum in some friendly country where he has interests like Panama or Grand Cayman or Cuba or Taiwan. There are any number of places he can act out the romantic role of a head of state in exile, forced out by an ungrateful people, a militant opposition. With luck he would be forgotten, left alone with his suitcases,

that some radical will go too far too.

We can only pray this does not occur, that Belize does not break its track record of peaceful transitions of power and peaceful elections. There is more at stake for us than the life of one man. Scores of Belizean men and boys die violent deaths every year. We hardly react anymore. In Belize the cost of living rises daily, but the value of life is at an all time low.

Still, we are not reckless. A great many people who wanted to go to Belmopan on Friday did not do so. They were apprehensive and afraid for their lives and property.



The Future of Printing



By: Trevor Vernon

I despise long weekends and we have been getting a lot these days. Why the Gods give all these holidays is beyond me in the first place. And to make it worse they give all the various holidays on a Monday which this wrecks havoc on our printing and distribution schedules. We come out on Tuesdays normally, which means that we must get our stuff to the printers we have contracted with, by Monday at the latest.

We don't own our own printing press so we give up a lot of control over our product to factors unknown. We live with that reality and deal with it accordingly. The plan was never to own one, to eventually go fully electronic, but we need to get the non-electronic presence established first and therein lies the massive expense.

The beauty of it all is that since the contents of the paper is floating around out there (electronically) as early as

Thursday the previous week, it invariably gets picked up, becomes material for the others to react to the following Tuesday. Big people, when they get the "early leak" on what's coming, are fairly predictable.

This is not cast aspersions on anyone whose services we contract. The paper is put together with one software and then "flattened" in pdf, another software, and emailed to the printer for printing. We know nothing goes around here in emails that btl and others doesn't have the fix on. And we know who controls btl Don't we? So we work with that reality too. They figure they have the leg up but like I said we have learnt to deal with the reality to massage it to work it in with our objectives. Give them stuff to think about, on the sly...in advance.

Now, our printing job is not a priority with our printers anymore. They have bigger fish to fry. We deal with that reality too. There are always other printers but we love National and the quality of their work. There are always choices and options in the printing business in Belize and outside of Belize. One could always buy the equipment and set up one's own printery, I suppose, if one has six figures to play with and cases of aspirin. For now we need that physical

printer product and have learnt to live with the costs. It ain't cheap.

Anyway, the government used to own a printery but like everything else, they transferred it to the private hands of their favorite people. The private transfer of the people's assets. Better not complain though, or you'll get branded a malcontent. Simply get with the program and get your piece of it too like the boys do, however small, take what you can get. And take it now and bury it deep. Time is running out fast.

I knew next to nothing of the newspaper business but that was before I became disillusioned and disgusted with the bold faced usurping of this country's good name by people who project one image to us here and another diametrically opposed one to the outside world. To the international community we are but a country of Arafat worshippers, run by the sons of the late great Arafat. Wake up and smell the camels.

My thing is to get these conflicting realities in sync, one way or the other.

Idealism? Most certainly.

Now I am considering acquiring a press, in spite of the research. Imagine the leap of faith; but, the timing might just be right given the pending

elections. I am not risk averse and Belize is not just an isolated pond anymore. Globalization has caught up with up the Belize Printing landscape and this is a good thing in the newspaper business. You don't have to rely exclusively on just what's available in Belize anymore. You can always reach out to the bigger ponds to tap resources that are beyond the influence of the control freaks in this here puddle.

But is it worth the gargantuan effort? The world is moving away from newsprint to a paperless newspaper, that's for sure. Printed materials are rapidly become passé even in the classrooms. Its just a matter of time before the printing press becomes obsolete and everything goes electronic. So we must balance this eventuality with current needs and growth demands.

They say if you don't grow you die off and we aint about the roll over anytime soon despite the many challenges.

So you now know why we got into the business, what my motivation is (yes its mostly reactionary), and where we are headed. Its going to be one hell of a ride but I think we have the stomach for it. Do you?

Caribbean must deepen integration: OAS Assistant Secretary General

As small and vulnerable economies, Caribbean states have no choice but to deepen their regional integration; it is simply a choice of how quickly to integrate, and how deeply. That was the message Assistant Secretary General Albert Ramdin of the Organization of American States (OAS) conveyed to a Saint Lucia seminar that brought together parliamentarians, including trade ministers, from the Caribbean Forum (CARIFORUM), made up of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) states and the Dominican Republic.

The seminar—entitled "Shaping a Trade Agenda to Promote Regional Integration and Competitiveness for CARICOM: The EPA and other Negotiating Challenges"—was organized by the OAS and the World Bank in conjunction with the government of Saint Lucia. It examined the current status of negotiations of the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA) to govern the new relationship between the European Union (EU) and the African-Caribbean-



*OAS Assistant Secretary General
Albert Ramdin*

Pacific (ACP) group of former European colonies. The seminar comes as the Caribbean is being encouraged to finalize its negotiating positions in time to meet the deadline and enable the implementation of the EPA in January 2008.

Sarah Flood-Beaubrun, Saint Lucia's National Assembly Speaker, and Guy

Mayers, the country's Minister for Trade, Industry and Commerce, as well as OAS Saint Lucia Country Representative Paul Spencer addressed the opening session Thursday, in addition to Ambassador Ramdin, who spoke by live video link from OAS headquarters in Washington. The Deputy Director General of the EU Commission and the Directorate General for Trade, Karl Falkenberg, also spoke at the seminar, which was attended by Saint Lucia's Acting Prime Minister Stephenson King and several members of the Cabinet.

"Perhaps the most critical tool to achieving the development objectives is through the deepening and strengthening of the region's integration process, currently enshrined within the framework of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy and the CARICOM-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement," Ambassador Ramdin noted. He urged the parliamentarians to critically examine the economic development challenges fac-

ing the sub-region, the impact of globalization on Caribbean economies and the role of free trade agreements in enhancing development, and to help "chart a course forward that will strategically position the region to benefit fully from the EPA."

Ramdin recalled that a primary objective of the EPA is "to address not merely the trade between the two regions but also, and more importantly, meet the overarching development goals of the CARIFORUM countries as they seek to reposition their economies to meet the challenges of globalization." Noting that under the present negotiations CARIFORUM countries are expected to open their markets to exports from the EU on a reciprocal basis, the OAS Assistant Secretary General argued that the shift in the EU-ACP relationship heralds a significant change for CARIFORUM countries, which previously enjoyed unilateral duty-free and quota-free access for their main exports to the EU.

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Indigenous Construction materials

By: Richard Harrison

The population and economy of Belize continues to grow regardless of all the trials and tribulations that have beset the country. It follows that the demand for housing will continue to be strong for the next two decades. How the supply responds to this demand will say a lot about us as a people. Scientific market research of the demand for housing can improve the way how the market responds.

I. FINANCING

Belize has traditionally depended on the commercial banks and credit unions for financing houses. At various stages, the Government has dabbled in the market directly or indirectly with Cuban houses, mobile homes, and lately the DFC-financed houses. The commercial banks and credit unions cannot by themselves respond to the needs of all segments of the demand. Government has a poor record of responding to the demand by its direct involvement, as in the DFC, Cuban and mobile-home scenarios.

Securitization is a standard in the financing of houses worldwide. Some would like to speak of securitization as some new instrument for which Belize needs to apply some 'learning curve', allowing for 'mistakes' to be made and accepted by the population as a 'cost of doing business'. If we continue to employ persons who are not qualified, experienced nor trained to suit a particular job, we can expect performance to suffer and a plethora of excuses to follow. A similar result can be expected if trained, experienced and qualified individuals become 'hired-gun mercenaries' for designers of shake-down schemes.

Some would like to have us believe that housing for lower and middle income persons carry some high and volatile risks for which the public purse must pay. The issue of risk in responding to this market has been discussed, analyzed and answered for decades. Insurance against such risk is commonly available through multilateral cooperation with development banks, and is standard procedure for these projects. The last time I checked, the trade of gold in Belize was still very vibrant. Peddlers go from house to house, and sell gold on credit to the lower and middle income families. If these lower and middle income people did not pay their bills, this trade would not be all that profitable.

Most multilateral cooperation however, like the UK Debt Forgiveness Program, are now linked to governance, democracy, poverty reduction and human rights performance in the receiving country. Governments seeking to access this help must show progress in these elements; and subject themselves

to rigorous due-diligence processes required by the multilateral agencies. Governments that do not seek to improve these elements according to acceptable criteria, will likely prefer to pursue the very expensive commercial financing route, instead of pursuing the much more concessionary financing available via multilateral cooperation. Such 'rebellious' governments argue that the conditions of the multilaterals are unacceptable and subservient, that they do not respect sovereignty; thus turning an economic decision into a political one; perhaps with personal ulterior motive. This causes low and middle income people to be subjected to very high-cost commercial financing as with the RBTT and Bear Stearns issues, resulting in very expensive and unaffordable housing for the lower and middle income persons. Some would want to argue for the speed of commercial credit processing, compared to the slowness of the multilateral agencies. I agree with our chief diplomat, a slow deal is better than a bad deal.

Belize will have to structure and harness its domestic financial resources in some private-public collaboration that will provide a new, more responsive and accountable system for addressing the supply of financing for houses. Belize will have to set up its own credible secondary mortgage market, perhaps by establishing an avenue for commercial banks, credit unions, Social Security Board, Insurance Companies, Government and Multilateral Agencies to collaborate, via a secondary mortgage market institution that is more private than public.

II. MATERIALS

Small and medium producers have much to look forward to from any new structure of the housing market. Belize needs to provide incentives for more indigenous materials to be used in housing construction and furnishing. Too many of the inputs for a house are im-

ported, which drains our financial resources. Currently, money flows from the mortgage bank, to the borrower, to the hardware retailers/importer, to the foreign supplier. The money disappears outside our borders, as soon as it appears...you can almost hear a sucking sound. Clay bricks are now made in Belize on a small scale, from close to 100% indigenous materials. They are currently expensive, mainly because appropriate technologies have not yet been introduced; which can significantly reduce the unit-cost-of-production. Surprisingly, there is no effort in Belize to stimulate construction material production enterprise.

In other countries, policies are put in place to stimulate small industry in construction materials, to complement the housing construction initiatives. Even in Mexico, where cement is abundant, they promote policies and practices that enhance the success of small industries. For example, clay bricks or 'ladrillos' are used for wall fill, instead of cement blocks. Cement and steel are still used for the corner columns and beams, which give strength to the structure. Most clay brick makers are small, family owned enterprises that use the clay in their villages; and thousands of these are scattered throughout Mexico; creating jobs and livelihoods for tens of thousands of men and women. As most of our architects are trained in Mexico, they are well aware of these practices. Our architects and engineers associations can be used as avenues to promote a policy to enhance the use of indigenous construction materials.

These policies enhance the benefits from investment in housing, by allowing the dollars to circulate through more hands, causing a greater ripple in the economy from every dollar spent on housing. In technical financial terms it is called "optimization of the multiplier effect".

III. ALTERNATIVES

The bay-leaf (guano) industry in Belize is estimated at around BZ\$5 million per annum. The leaf, when available, sell for as much as BZ\$1.00 each and is usually scarce. There is a demand for this leaf, or its substitutes, from South Carolina to Montego Bay. Belize should commercialize the production of bay-leaf, and it should be done based on a domestic initiative that promotes traditional high-quality Mayan-style architected homes in all our rural areas. They are more appropriate for our climate, last as long as the Mennonite houses which are in high demand, and can use almost 90% indigenous materials. Such an initiative would create the demand for bay-leaf at levels that would support commercial farming of this indigenous plant, such that volumes and quality could be made available for export.

The botan posts were once widely used for house corner posts and beams, as well as for building piers in the sea, and for protecting water-side land from erosion. They are very durable. These have all but disappeared. This product could also be commercialized; as it grows 'wild' in Belize.

Bamboo is being used in its raw and processed forms, in all areas of housing and furniture construction, especially in the far-east countries. Belize grows bamboo in all its various varieties. One company, Hummingbird Rattan, produces very high quality furnishings out of bamboo. Bamboo products should also be commercialized on a greater scale for the domestic and export markets.

In short, our architects and engineers need to be more than just collaborators with the multinational corporations that wish to send us their "stuff". They should also play a role in helping to find commercial uses for more of our indigenous building materials. BELTRAIDE, (Please Turn To Page 7)

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Rock the Boat?

By: Mario Lara

The final report of the Political Reform Commission of 2000 summed up its position on whether the system of government in Belize should be changed by stating, "Let's rock the boat but not overturn it." Well, look at where merely rocking the boat has gotten us. The system of government that Belizeans inherited from their colonial masters is not working to the benefit of the majority of Belizeans. We have a national debt at 100% of GDP with little to show for it. Therefore, Belizeans need to seriously start asking themselves how long they are willing to keep going down this road. Did we get our independence only to be timid about how we change things? What's the point of being an independent nation if we're not bold enough to discard what we inherited from the colonial masters and what clearly is not working to the benefit of the majority of the people?

No system of government is perfect.

Few things are. But, no one can deny that there's got to be a much better way for intelligent and independent people to govern themselves. Giving carte blanche authority to a political party every five years and allowing it to mismanage the resources of the nation, mainly to the benefit of a few cronies, for its entire term in office without any effective means of oversight and checks and balances, seems like an obvious problem that should be fixed right away. So, why haven't we done so? If we ran a business this way, with no effective system of oversight, we'd be ripped off and easily bankrupt. Why do we assume it will be any different with government?

The people of Belize are clearly frustrated with the series of missteps by the current GOB. But, will the people have to demonstrate and take to the streets over every misstep the government of the day makes? Is that any way to run an independent country? Given the series of missteps by

GOB, it is obvious there needs to be more far-reaching political reforms and better systems of oversight. But, who will have the courage and integrity to put the bell on that cat? Merely voting out the offending party and voting in another without fixing the root causes of the problems will only lead to more of the same further down the road.

All Belizeans should ask themselves the hard question, has the time come to overturn the boat? Should Belize discard the Parliamentary Executive model for an Executive Presidential

model or some sort of hybrid that would give the House more power and oversight over the Executive?

I know the hurdles and resistance such a move would face. Why give up what we inherited from our colonial masters only to copy from somewhere else, worse of all the US? Every model has its pros and cons.

But, think about it. We gave up driving on the left side of the road and that turned out okay. It's just a tradition, that's all it really is – nothing sacred about it at all.

OAS resumes Award of Scholarships

The Organization of American States (OAS) has adopted a resolution to "permanently lift the pause in the awarding of OAS scholarships," thus paving the way for students in the member states to pursue new opportunities for training and higher education.

In welcoming the resumption of the scholarship awards, OAS Assistant Secretary General Albert R. Ramdin said, "I am convinced the mechanisms which have been put in place—both institutionally as well as in terms of policy—will satisfy the needs of all member states in a manner that best serves the people of the Americas, particularly our youth population."

The OAS program will provide approximately 100 full scholarships per year for students pursuing undergraduate or graduate degrees, as well as opportunities for some 1,000 students to take on-line training courses.

According to the Assistant Secretary General, OAS scholarships are especially important for the smaller economies of the Western Hemisphere as they not only benefit individual students, but also contribute to development by helping to build capacity on the ground in those countries.

"Lifting the pause will pave the way for a more robust scholarship and training program," said Ambassador Ellsworth John of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, who introduced the resolution during a joint meeting Wednesday of the OAS Permanent Council and the Inter-American Council for Integral Development (CEPCIDI).

John, who chairs CEPCIDI, explained that the revamped system incorporates new mechanisms to facilitate a thorough review process for the awarding of graduate and undergraduate scholarships. Ambassador John identified several positive changes that had been made in the program, including the adoption of a new manual of procedures, rigorous financial controls, and systems for monitoring third-party performance.

"The future of our economies and the future of our democracies are closely linked to our ability to adequately educate this and future generations," noted Assistant Secretary General Ramdin. "The OAS, through its scholarship and other programs, plays a critical role in shaping the future of this region."

from www.oas.org

Indigenous Construction materials

 (Continued From Page 6)

like PACT, should find and make available pilot project funds for this purpose, such that local builders could compete for the funds to conduct pilot projects that utilize indigenous construction materials and to develop new designs that enhance durability, comfort, style and utility of such dwellings.

IV. ESTABLISHED MATERIALS

Various investors have tried to produce plywood, fibre-glass products and PVC tubing for the construction industry in Belize. BELTRAIDE needs to do an analysis of why these projects have not succeeded, given that we import such great quantities of these materials each year. CET needs to establish courses in the building of high quality ceramics (tiles and bathroom fixtures) and cast-iron metal furniture. If our local industries are not afforded 'home court advantages' in their early stages by Government policy, they will never prosper. Indeed, they will be still-born. Government officials need to stop hiding behind excuses about WTO restrictions, as that organization very explicitly recognizes the right of member countries to safeguard the interest of its nascent industries.

V. TIMBER

Many valuable varieties of timber trees grow well in Belize; including mahogany, cedar, rosewood, red wood, santa

maria, granadillo, hobillo, cabbage bark, pine and teak. The timber that results serves not only the wood cutter, but also the sawmill operators, builders, furniture makers, home-dwellers and tax collectors. Planting a timber tree, given that there is no incentive in place, is a noble exercise which not all investors are likely to undertake due to scarce resources. But it would seem like natural justice that those who cut trees down for a living should be required to plant new trees. Our country charges money for timber concessions, as well as royalty on the timber that is felled. Now that Belize is importing most of its pine timber through special importers, the high customs charges on such imports must be going into general revenue?! At least 50% of these monies should go into an ear-marked fund to provide cash incentives for private investments in reforestation. This will speed up the planting of timber trees which will increase the chances for Belize to develop a sustainable forestry industry in the lifetime of my seven-year-old son and your own children.

We should never abandon our roots... especially those that grow out of our soil naturally. Taking our eyes off forestry would be like abandoning fishing. It would be like jumping the fence, to find solutions that are right under your nose. BUT... then again... common-sense is not so common. Hmmm.

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Current Issues

Behind the Scenes Friday

By: Meb Cutlack

The heat was inside and outside the House on Friday, but, even more insidious than the UHS scandal (which caused the outrage), was the presentation for second reading of the Shrimp Bill, the Chalillo tax relief bill and some, equally evil bill relating to BTL.

The government is quite blatantly forcing through tax relief bills for local and foreign cronies at the expense of Belizeans.

Every write-off of taxes for the shrimp industry means that the burden of replacing that tax falls directly on the shoulders of the ordinary Belizeans. Once again, as the PUP gear up to try to buy the next election (as they bought the last one), they are throwing expensive favors in all directions to bring them in heavy donations from their cronies and foreign friends.

The very idea of giving tax breaks to Fortis Inc., for the Chalillo Hydro project, when Fortis already make proportionately much more profit from little Belize than from any other of their other hydro or electricity projects worldwide, is outrageous.

Pandering to Barry Bowen and the shrimp producers is equally and cynically cheating the Belizean people of millions of tax dollars - which they, the ordinary tax payer will have to fork out.

The worst evil of this system of rewarding the rich and depriving the poor is the way in that, while these 'donations' will add up to a few million dollars in cash and cheques, the amount of tax dollars which will be lost to the exchequer, and to the Belizean people, will amount to million of dollars over the next few years. More 'stolen' money which will eventually eclipse even the UHS money.

One of the most pressing priorities in Belize today is to control, determine, and lessen the huge sums spent on elections. Every donation in excess of \$10,000 should have to be openly declared so that the

Belizean electorate can see exactly who is buying favors and how much they are paying government to be able to 'collect' afterwards.

Today in Belize there is no doubt at all that huge sums of drug money find their way into the coffers of both parties particularly at election time. There is also no doubt that every day in Belize more and more drug money is circulating and being laundered through Belizean businesses and banks.

International agencies now classify Belize as a major drug shipment and transfer locale - via both the inland route through Guatemala and through Belize to Mexico and the coastal route, by fast boats from Panama and Columbia, through Belize's offshore Cayes.

The estimates are that more than one third, or even a half of all the

cocaine entering the USA now comes via these route. It is also estimated by international agencies that there are scores of young Belizeans involved in the trade. One group are the drug related street gangs murdering each other on a regular basis but more powerful, as each day goes by, are the 'young lions' of the new local and Mexican drug cartels. Young men from 'good' north side families.

They are fast becoming 'untouchables' as their deadly and warring factions take over the routes and enterprises once run by the old and deadly Colombian Medellin Cartel.

What price Belize and Belizeans will have to eventually pay for this can perhaps be seen in recent events in Guatemala, El Salvador and Mexico where drug related killings are rising at an alarming rate.

The recent murder of the four Central American politicians by Guatemalan police, who were then themselves assassinated, is the tip of a new drug and gun war oozing though the whole of Central America - including Belize.

The accusation that there are even Belizean politicians heavily involved in offshore drug running should give both the Government and the Opposition pause for thought. It is a cause for both parties to conduct an examination of any of their Members and Ministers who are rolling in wealth - and have island bases and sport yachts, cars and houses - which they cannot account for by their salaries, or even from family wealth.

Follow the money indeed, and see where it leads. And to whom.

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Starving the Poor

By: Noam Chomsky

The chaos that derives from the so-called international order can be painful if you are on the receiving end of the power that determines that order's structure. Even tortillas come into play in the ungrand scheme of things. Recently, in many regions of Mexico, tortilla prices jumped by more than 50 per cent.

In January, in Mexico City, tens of thousands of workers and farmers rallied in the Zocalo, the city's central square, to protest the skyrocketing cost of tortillas.

In response, the government of President Felipe Calderon cut a deal with Mexican producers and retailers to limit the price of tortillas and corn flour, very likely a temporary expedient.

In part the price-hike threat to the food staple for Mexican workers and the poor is what we might call the ethanol effect - a consequence of the US stampede to corn-based ethanol as an energy substitute for oil, whose major wellsprings, of course, are in regions that even more grievously defy international order.

In the United States, too, the ethanol effect has raised food prices over a broad range, including other crops, livestock and poultry.

The connection between instability in the Middle East and the cost of feeding a family in the Americas isn't direct, of course. But as with all international trade, power tilts the balance. A leading goal of US foreign policy has long been to create a global order in which US corporations have free access to markets, resources and investment opportunities. The objective is commonly called "free trade," a posture that collapses quickly on examination.

It's not unlike what Britain, a predecessor in world domination, imagined during the latter part of the 19th century, when it embraced free trade, after 150 years of state intervention and violence had helped the nation achieve far greater industrial power than any rival.

The United States has followed much the same pattern. Generally, great powers are willing to enter into some limited degree of free trade when they're convinced that the economic interests under their protection are going to do well. That has been, and remains, a primary feature of the international order.

The ethanol boom fits the pattern. As discussed by agricultural economists C Ford Runge and Benjamin Senauer in the current issue of Foreign Affairs, "the biofuel industry has long been dominated not by market forces but by poli-



Corn is more valuable to man as a food than as fuel.

tics and the interests of a few large companies," in large part Archer Daniels Midland, the major ethanol producer. Ethanol production is feasible thanks to substantial state subsidies and very high tariffs to exclude much cheaper and more efficient sugar-based Brazilian ethanol. In March, during President Bush's trip to Latin America, the one heralded achievement was a deal with Brazil on joint production of ethanol. But Bush, while spouting free-trade rhetoric for others in the conventional manner, emphasized forcefully that the high tariff to protect US producers would remain, of course along with the many forms of government subsidy for the industry. Despite the huge, taxpayer-supported agricultural subsidies, the prices of corn — and tortillas — have been climbing rapidly. One factor is that industrial users of imported US corn increasingly purchase cheaper Mexican varieties used for tortillas, raising prices.

The 1994 US-sponsored NAFTA agreement may also play a significant role, one that is likely to increase. An unlevel-playing-field impact of NAFTA was to flood Mexico with highly subsidised agribusiness exports, driving Mexican producers off the land.

Mexican economist Carlos Salas reviews data showing that after a steady rise until 1993, agricultural employment began to decline when NAFTA came into force, primarily among corn producers — a direct consequence of NAFTA, he and other economists conclude. One-sixth of the Mexican agricultural work force has been displaced in the NAFTA years, a process that is continuing, depressing wages in other sectors of the economy and impelling emigration to the US.

It is, presumably, more than coincidental that President Clinton militarised the Mexican border, previously quite open, in 1994, along with implementation of NAFTA.

The "free trade" regime drives Mexico from self-sufficiency in food towards dependency on US exports. And as the price of corn goes up in the United States, stimulated by corporate power and state intervention, one can anticipate that the price of staples may continue its sharp rise in Mexico.

Increasingly, bio fuels are likely to "starve the poor" around the world, according to Runge and Senauer, as staples are converted to ethanol production for the privileged - cassava in sub-Saharan Africa, to take one omi-

nous example. Meanwhile, in Southeast Asia, tropical forests are cleared and burned for oil palms destined for bio fuel, and there are threatening environmental effects from input-rich production of corn-based ethanol in the United States as well.

The high price of tortillas and other, crueler vagaries of the international order illustrate the interconnectedness of events, from the Middle East to the Middle West, and the urgency of establishing trade based on true democratic agreements among people, and not interests whose principal hunger is for profit for corporate interests protected and subsidised by the state they largely dominate, whatever the human cost. -- *The News International*

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TOO WILD FOR WORDS! The Most Incredible Jaguar Conservation Program!!!

It is a “roaring” success! The Belize Zoo “Problem Jaguar Rehab Program” is now four years old and stands as a stunning role model to assist a serious environmental conflict.

What is the conflict? Jaguar, who continually prey upon domestic animals, like dogs, or livestock, like cattle and sheep, are often “damaged” cats.

Missing teeth and claws, or weakened by parasites, these endangered big cats cannot effectively hunt. Then, combine a less-than-fit jaguar with a habitat that continues to shrink and a prey base that is less and less, well, it can easily be seen why a jaguar would chase after “easy prey”.

This situation is a problem throughout the range of the jaguar. The usual “solution” to the problem has been to destroy the cats.

The Belize Zoo offered a more positive alternative: Send the cats to a special “rehab” program at the zoo. There,



Sharon Mattola feeds jaguar cub “Junior” at The Belize Zoo.

these spotted “ex-cons” go thru

behaviour modification and over time, become “people friendly” jaguars.

Then what? They cannot be returned to the wild. But another door opened up for these extraordinary animals.

Zoological facilities in North America are in great need of new genetic input

for the captive jaguar population.

The “problem Jaguars” can reproduce! And what a delightful life they meet after “rehab”!!

These cats go to very “upscale” zoological facilities. Mates await them. The zoos acquiring a problem jaguar ensure that environmental education is a big part of their exhibit.

So... visitors learn about the jaguar and also the environmental problems currently facing these great cats.

One of the Problem Jaguars, a female cattle killer, came to the zoo pregnant. Zoo officials did not know and what a surprise for us all. She gave birth on February 4, but sadly, rejected her cub “Junior”, as he is known, quickly came under the diligent care of The Belize Zoo staff, and today, he is a happy, thriving jaguar “toddler”.

He will soon be on exhibit at the zoo, and will draw important attention to the plight of the jaguar in Belize. “Junior” will underscore all the good efforts being made in our nation by the Government of Belize, the Belize Audubon Society, the Belize Zoo, and Belizeans everywhere, aimed at saving the Jaguar for future generations.

VIP abstains from Friday's UHS protest

In unity with the Belizean people, VIP continues to condemn and resist the abusive actions of government in relation to the UHS/Belize Bank scandal. We maintain that not one cent of the people's money should be squandered to pay private debt. We call on all Belizeans and friends of Belize to resist this blatantly obvious abuse of power by our government.

We condemn the irresponsible actions and inactions of the UDP in the conduct of its protest on May 18th, that led to un-necessary violence, injury and senseless destruction of private and public property. We call on the Mayor of Belmopan and his Council to henceforth show leadership in maintaining safety and

good order within our capital.

The VIP hereby notifies Belizeans that the party shall continue to organize peaceful and constructive activities to resist government's abuses but shall not participate in the public protest planned for May 25th in Belmopan.



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By: Julia Heusner

“Crushes”

What is a crush ?

A crush is a word used to describe special feelings you have for another person, a classmate, or friend that you really like. Noticing your first crush is an exciting time in life because you're beginning to understand how it feels to like another person. Sometimes, feelings for a crush can be confusing because they're new to you and you aren't sure how to act. You could have mixed feelings. When you see your crush, a part of you might feel embarrassed and you might want to run away and hide or

giggle uncontrollably. Another part of you might imagine your crush noticing you and sharing the same feelings. And in a way, a crush can help us think about the kind of person that we want to love when we grow up.

How do you know if you're obsessed with your crush?

1. You've Forgotten Your Friends. (you ditch your friends to hang with him/her.)

2. You've Got a Serious Jealous Streak. (you can't stand when he/she is always talking about some one else.)

3. You Say "I'm totally over him/her, but..." (if you're totally over him why are you still talking about her/him?)

Age Differences

Sometimes you will have a crush on some one older than you are. Or someone older than you will have a crush on you. But if this person is a lot older and you don't like them they might even begin to stalk you. They also may say some things that will make you feel a little uncom-

fortable. If that happens, tell your teacher or parents, or both. In some cultures it is considered ok to have an older man about 30 or 40 married to a 14 year old girl. It's tradition, while other cultures consider it perversion and make laws against it.

But I say it's better to stick with people your own age and just have fun having a crush, nothing serious.

If you have a story you would share with us, or any issues you would like to have teen page talk about, send it to independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com.



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ARIES (Mar. 21- April 20)

Secret affairs will only lead to heartache. Your irritability may drive your loved ones crazy. Consider applying for a job in another part of the world. Avoid any gossip and be careful that you aren't misinterpreted. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

TAURUS (Apr. 21- May 21)

Opportunities to pamper yourself may unfold. Be sure that you have all the facts before you take action. Extravagance and overindulgence are not a cure if you're feeling sorry for yourself. You will find it easy finalizing personal papers if you make an effort. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21)

You need an outlet. You can certainly gain popularity; however, don't do it by paying for everyone else. Don't let other people meddle in your private affairs. You are best to concentrate on work. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Changes in your residence may be financially favorable. You can help a close friend find solutions to personal problems. You could meet potential new mates if you go out with friends or take pleasure trips. You will be able to get along well with colleagues. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

LEO (July 23-Aug 22)

Deal with in-laws this week. Find ways to mellow out. Relationships will become stronger. You are best to avoid such unsavory circumstances, especially if you're in a group situation. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 -Sept. 23)

You may be likely to have difficulties with females. Beware of someone who is trying to make you look bad. Residential moves look hectic and sudden changes in your life are likely. You will reap the benefits if you put money into upgrading your residence. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 -Oct. 23)

Involvement in groups of interest will bring you in touch with important individuals. Your mate may not have been

honest with you. You can get others to do things for you but be sure not to overpay them or lend them money. Secret enemies will be eager to spread rumors about you. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)

A lot can be accomplished if you organize your time. Try to understand their point of view. You may be experiencing emotional turmoil in regard to your mate. Don't get intimately involved with a coworker. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 -Dec. 21)

Be supportive in order to avoid confrontations. Changes in your home are apparent, and you must be willing to bend if you don't want to find yourself alone. Problems with in-laws may cause friction in your personal relationship. Don't let your partner get away with spending too much of your money. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22.- Jan. 20)

Your involvement in interest groups may bring you popularity. Changes in your domestic situation will prove to be favorable in the long run. Don't take advantage of your expense account. You can expect to feel confused about your personal prospects. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 -Feb. 19)

Avoid lending money or belongings to friends. Take part in stimulating debates that will allow you to show off your intelligence. It's a good time to make changes to your living quarters that will give you more space. Disappointments are likely if your mate embarrasses you in front of friends. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

PISCES (Feb. 20-Mar. 20)

You could meet an interesting individual you'll want to get to know better. You can learn a great deal if you listen to those who are older or more experienced. You will get along well with your colleagues this week. Channel your energy into decorating or household chores. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

Swim for the Reef

In celebration of the 10 year Anniversary of the Tulum Declaration June 5, 2007 in which the governments of the region stated their commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of the Mesoamerican Reef, a consortium of government and non-government organizations involved in marine conservation in Belize is sponsoring a photo competition and "Swim for the Reef" as part of Reef Week June 5 - 8, 2007.

In Celebration of World Ocean Day (June 8) a swim across the English Caye Channel is being organized (approximately 1.6 miles) to raise awareness of marine conservation in Belize. Interested swimmers see contact below.

Photo categories include professional and amateur for both underwater and general coastal/marine themes. Each photographer can submit up to two photos for each theme. Deadline for entries is June 1, 2007. Please mail to: or deliver to the ICRAN-MAR Office, Coastal Resources Multicomplex Building second floor, Fisheries Compound, Princess Margaret Drive, Belize City.

For more information contact: Armeid Thompson tel 223-4673 or email icranmar@btl.net, athompson@icran.org. Cash prizes will be awarded.



The sea near Belize's cayes and reefs is so cool and inviting, let's join the fun and jump in! Swim for the Reef 2007!

Has Mind Guru's teaching paid off in Giant Oil Strike?

➡ (Continued From Page 3)
struck oil on the anniversary of his death. Mike Usher 2 and 3, the second and third holes, proved they not only had struck oil but that it was of the highest quality possible.

"In all the surrounding countries you've got heavy crude oil the consistency of butter, like Kerrygold, which has to be refined," said McCaffrey. "The quality of their oil is just 15-25 API (a measurement of oil purity). Here we're sitting on oil which is closer to 40. To

Eye of the Hurricane

➡ (Continued From Page 4)
PUP, but if the PUP ministers vote "Hell NO" and put a stop to the UHS loan payment they too will be rewarded by the people of Belize. The risk to their standing in the PUP any punishment from the executive is an illusion; or at least only temporary until the inevitable change of leadership. Until the man at the helm is swept overboard or jumps into his lifeboat and escapes to Margueritaville.

We are in the eye of the storm this week, a storm in which the looting arrived BEFORE the hurricane. Yes, the tidal wave may sweep away some innocent people, damage some property. But like so many times before, after it passes Belizeans will rebuild, better than before. And the survivors will also go on to swap stories of survival and courage for many years to come.

get an idea of what that means, diesel in a refined state is 42."

Producers in surrounding countries have only discovered oilfields that yield up to 200 bpd, while BNE is pumping 1,000 bpd. McCaffrey estimates at least 70m barrels lie under their exploration area.

"You'd expect in a situation like this it must be people vastly experienced in the oil industry and backed by people who are industry professionals. That is just the opposite of us," she said.

"The result is what you're starting to see now, transposing itself out of the ground. People can be as sceptical about it as they

like, quite frankly, but I would be prepared to just sit back and say the results will speak for themselves."

So is the local government. John Briceno, Belize's minister of natural resources, calculates that at current prices the government's take from even small-scale pumping of around 60,000 bpd would fund the country's budget.

"If we could produce even 20,000 bpd, you can imagine what we could do with that," he said in a recent interview. "It could make a huge difference for our little country."

Last week BNE volunteered to give 1%

of its earnings to a fund for medical and environmental initiatives in the state. It has already handed over the first \$500,000 (€13,480), even before its contract comes into effect.

The Irish company has been remarkably quick about turning its discovery into cash. In January, it shipped 40,000 barrels to Houston, earning \$2m.

The 7.5% royalty it has to pay Belize is much less than in other oil-producing countries. Royalties to Norway for exploration in the North Sea are 70%..

<http://www.esatclear.ie/~dialogueireland/a2z/tq/tq07.htm>

Nature's Way Guesthouse

In Punta Gorda

Welcome To Nature's Way Guesthouse
Clean, Safe, Affordable,
Central Location Sea Front View & Breeze
Single \$23BZD, Double \$33BZD,
Triple \$48BZD
Get off bus at Catholic Church on
Main & Church Streets, walk down
hill 75 yards to Guesthouse.

TOPICAL TIDBITS

First off, people need to understand a few things about the political realities of Belize. So for the uninitiated, here goes. The very public Speaker of the House of Representatives, Elizabeth Zabeneh's maiden name is Usher. She is the niece of former PM George Price and sister to his other niece, Lenni Jo Usher, the mother of Said's set of kids born out of wedlock. These children are all named Usher, while those from his lovely British-born wife are named Musa. Nothing personal here. These people are all public figures.

Now most of this is supposed to be common knowledge but it never, for some reason, seemed to disturb the Belizean people enough to become a moral issue. Perhaps it was politeness or a desire to protect the feelings of innocent children. But the kids are no longer children and their father has been carefully placing them in positions of influence, both inside and outside Belize.

One of the Musa boys is the head of NICH, another an attorney (who represents him in court when there are libel suits), and yet another is the one who got into some much trouble with the Gurkhas, who mauled the Zabaneh boy to oblivion at the house of ill repute... when he was only 14. One of the royal Usher boys is now the Secretary General of the PUP. Perhaps only due to the influence of his great-uncle, first Prime Minister George Cadle Price, rather than his otherwise un-named father on the birth certificate.

We all wink and blink at the rampant duality of the existence of the Prime Minister of this country. Two families, like the tale of two cities. We all wink

and blink at the presence of his wife at official functions and his mistress at house meetings. But is it appropriate for his "sister-unlaw" to be the Speaker of that house? Really? That's pushing it too far. Isn't it? There's got to be some sense of common decency, somewhere.

To those who say the man's private life is private, I say no more! Clearly now his private life is intersecting his public life and affecting all of our lives....

These ties really put us in a bind. Don't they? Imagine if a Musa son named Usher had a child with one of Esquivel's daughters! Serious royal family there: a child with sanguine lines to all three Prime Ministers. Our first truly Belizean Royal Family unlike any other. Imagine. BTW, for those who do not know, Esquivel was the second Prime Minister of Belize.

So Inversiones S.A./Banco Atlantida (Honduras) succumbs to local political pressure to discipline ACB activist/Belizean employee Glen Ysaguirre. What's new? The BTL chair, the Lord's point man, said they would go after ACB members in a public release. Point blank. No guessing. I don't think Bra Billy and the Hindu Bag One, had to be leaned on too hard. After all, the Bag One dutifully sat through the entire passport pusher's trial and pulled the appropriate strings to keep the money flowing. Casinos aren't his only gamble. Getting the Honduran Chair to get rid of Ysaguirre was easy money.

Corridor talk says the Lord has made a move after Steve Duncan, seasoned Manager of First Caribbean

Bank. Should be simple enough to swing, despite the fact that Duncan is probably the best thing to ever happen to First Caribbean. Headquartered in Barbados... Little England... they worship British Lords. And the Barbadian PM is quite lovey dovey with Belize's PM because of some \$35 Million dollar "investment."

If Duncan gets the ax, I say we ax the Belizean public to boycott this bank too...

The Dr. Barnett thing isn't puzzling and wasn't driven by any nationalism. Self preservation, and saving face when colleagues and counterparts start the ribbing. No magic there. The approval of her peers in the CARICOM Secretariat, CDB, and elsewhere has to be important to her as it would be any professional. No medals there, please. And no special promotion for Joe Waight either, he's been FS before. Then his conscience pricked him and Ralph disciplined him to get him to toe the line. Has he now lost his moral compass and become willing to walk back into the heavily compromised seat because he wants his title & position back and is prepared to play the game? Carla should have done this years ago, not last week.

Can we do anything about this Lord who is so widely despised and disliked across this land? Does he really own all the pols or just the slippery ones? Really, are they all prostitutes? What examples are they setting for their kids and ours? Sell yourself for a few dollars more. And we wonder why so many young girls are selling their souls to tourists & older gentlemen. Come on, Belize, grow a pair

and put this guy in check.

Said masterfully rushed through a lot of business-friendly bills in the house last Friday while the crowd outside the house was waiting to say No to the Musa give-away. He hooked up Barry with the Aquaculture Bill, Fortis with the other Bill, and Ashcroft with the BTL tax exemption extension bill. He also passed a SI to jack up pump prices that same night, without explanation. We are still waiting on the Campaign Finance Reform Bill we hear was aimed at NRP's financiers. We are dying to have a look see. Then there was the MALOCCHIO Bill they are calling the BSI amendment act; have to hook up the Panamanian too.

Lots of speculation on who is backing NRP with the kind of money its leader mentioned. We shan't speculate. Send the ads; we aren't in any mood to reject them. Cornelius was on LOVE FM morning show last Friday, just after the Belize City Branch of VIP Leadership was on.

It's all about the Benjamins, isn't it?

He's baaaaack! It's Derek against Goliath as the Aik-man pulls in some popular support with a poll. Only he could have pulled that kind of thing off so fast and effectively. The new covenant movement is the latest entry in the alternate pressure group horse gallop and they are off to a quick and effective start. Go dey my Buoy, you planning to beat this PUP PM, too?



THE hunt HEALTHY FOR FOOD with Anthony Hunt

BELIZEAN MEAT PIES

Water Lane, Belize City

Well, you say..this ought be interesting. Our fair reviewer eating pies and trying to stay on a diet. Well, damn the torpedoes and the cholesterol level, and indulge a little, JUST a little. You can have one or two, but don't eat \$4 worth. Even, if in my opinion, they are the best meat pies in town. Judging by the line outside (not in this afternoon pic), a lot of others ditto my vote for the best. Belizean Meat-Pies is a late comer to the biggest part of the local diet (except for "Fry" Chicken or course), but they are a serious competitor to the throne that currently sits between Hyde's Lane and New Road, a throne that might be moving soon. And while this reviewer eagerly awaits the original Jamaican sensation soon to open on Freetown Road, the place of choice to get my gravy and crispy crust mixture of meat pie heaven is firmly anchored on Water Lane. Now the big question is will the man at the top (yes that is you Mr Musa, for now!) switch his allegiances and line up on the Southside on Saturday mornings? The country awaits an executive decision, no protest needed!

- ★
- ★
- ★

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Guest Gallery



Genelle Pop displays her handicrafts at Cacao Fest. (Photo by Nadja Chamberlain)



Independent Weekly's Trevor Vernon proudly displays the 100 lb shark his friend Abel Rodriguez Jr. caught out on Turneffe Reef in April 2006.



Governor General Sir Colville Young inspects Mayan women's handicrafts at the Cacao Fest. (Photo by Nadja Chamberlain)



Mayan musicians entertained visitors at Cacao Fest. (Photo by Nadja Chamberlain)

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The INdependent Reformer is offer-

ing free classified ads for the month of May:

- 1) 20 words or less
- 2) one ad per person in the promotional period for free (additional ads are only \$10 each)
- 3) with photo (first time free...\$10 additional for photo ads) jpeg or tiff formats only. **Must be emailed, no disk pickup or drop off**
- 4) business card -first run is free for month of May, 2007, \$20 a run thereafter
- 5) All classified ads must be emailed to independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com with cc to kheusner@yahoo.com and checks to PO Box 2666, Belize City. Please note: We must receive your ad by Friday at mid-day for inclusion in following Tuesday issue.

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Asking Bz\$1,000 O.B.O.
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Letters to the Editor

(Continued From Page 2)

Belizean Stalwart speaks out

Hon. Said Musa
Prime Minister
Belmopan

Dear Said,

I open up personally, because I have known you personally. In 1987, when you and Luke Espat came to my house near Lopez Mateos Park (the place where I was later to be deeply humiliated and crushed by you and the PUP), you both convinced me to join forces with you and the PUP, to get the party elected. Liking the excitement of the prospect of getting involved in high level politics, I agreed, and eventually became a PUP standard bearer, campaigned most heavily for the party, neglected my family and business, spoke loudly and clearly in support of the party on every single rostrum throughout the length and breadth of Belize, time and time and time again, and in the process making enemies I have to this day, who have and continue to ensure I am punished. I suffered the indignity of arrest and incarceration, was processed through the supreme court on utterly serious, but false charges, and eventually, by the grace of God, and with you as my prime defence, was set free, as innocent men must be, at all times. No person in Belize has suffered more for

the PUP - none.

In time, the PUP decided that I was not to be part of their future, and you could not, or would not do anything about that; in fact, no less than a couple hundred feet away from the same home where you came to look for me to help you win, you and the PUP destroyed my every hope at Lopez Mateos Park in 1992. Notice, please, that I walked away, into the night, to rededicate myself to family, and attempt to rescue my little tour operation. But too much damage had been done to me; like so many thousands of others in Belize, my business failed, because of politics, my personal fortunes waned and were destroyed, I lost my family home, and now, sunk in a hole deeper than I can ever get out of, I have joined the tens of thousands of Belizeans in the same hole with me, seething with rage, feeling lost and helpless, and praying for miracles to happen, while working like dogs to survive.

You, meanwhile, Sir, have expressed publicly that you are "following the money". Based on my military background, my political help to get you where you are, and make you what you are, I am hereby appealing you to use the power you now have, and which I helped you to achieve, to reverse the horrible trend Belize now faces. Reject the Dark Lord who has brought a new colonial era to our

beloved Belize; reject the false voices who are pointing your name into the darkest annals of our history; change the course of events that have brought our Beloved Belize to its knees, wounded, hungry and extremely angry. It is your name that is and will forever be in the forefront of hisotry - not the dreadful men who have and continue to feed voraciously on the nation's wealth and resources. Become the hero you can be, once and for all.

Said, please open your eyes and see the pain in the the eyes of your closest true friends, in the eyes of the men, women and children of this nation, numbering in the tens of thousands. Forget the dark politics that have brought you and this nation to the brink of disaster; wake, up, stand up, feel in your heart what must surely be in your heart, but covered by ugly circumstances - the pain and suffering and hoplessness of a people puzzled and now angered by that which even Assad Shoman had to admit - the wealth of the nation being concentrated in the hands of a few, while the majority are left without, and without hope.

History is preparing to write you up very, very badly, while taking the people and nation down a narrow, thorny path of pain and ruin and deprivation.

As God is our maker, and our deliverer, Said, please listen to this voice that once admired you, supported you, and helped you to win. You are Prime Minister and Leader

of the PUP because of men like me. Change the course of our history, and yours - turn away from the greedy and dangerous few, back to the nation and its multitudes. From the Rio Hondo to the Sarstoon, from the Cayes to the western borders, the people of Belize, YOUR people, are crying out - men, women and children. Turn back to them, do not turn your back on them - turn back to them, and they will support you through thick and thin, to the very end.

The rage is growing - stem the tide, or it will rise and overwhelm you and everyone else, bringing nothing but disaster and ruin. Stop calling down the lightning - the thunder is much, much too close.

Tom Greenwood
Former Standard Bearer
Queen's Square
People's United Party

Editor's Note: We believe Mr. Greenwood's letter speaks volumes about the integrity of the man we call our Prime Minister.



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How We Are Governed

☞ (Continued From Page 3)

only recently completed training in non-lethal tactics against a civilian opponent, as part of the US-sponsored Operation Tradewinds. The bullets they fired were only rubber, but the bullets raised welts the size of a "Johnny-cake" on the unwary protestors who got hit. But let's not forget how the Police/BDF handled the Tower Hill bridge and Benque bus protests, when they fired live rounds.

The Riot Squad revealed how inept they were at their new role when they fired tear-gas canisters into the crowd, without first putting on their OWN tear-gas masks. Alert demonstrators braved the rubber bullets to pick up the gas canisters and hurl them back at the police and the police had to halt to rinse out their eyes and put on their masks before they could continue their advance. That gas subsequently wafted in through the windows of the National Assembly, affecting members of the House of Representatives and creating such physical discomfort they had to suspend the sitting. It seems no one instructed the riot squad to determine the wind direction before launching their canisters either. Or maybe they did...?

The protestors, out of range of the rubber bullets, vented their anger and frustration by throwing all manner of missiles to break the louvered windows and glass doors of the public buildings which surround Independence Plaza. The mob violence spread as the protestors retreated before the police and vehicles parked outside the Belmopan market and other public buildings such as the Social Security building also came under attack and numerous private vehicles were vandalized and a couple of government ones as well.

Eventually, the protestors got back on their buses to return home and the police fearful that the violence might spill back to Belize City, advised businesses to close up early. Most heeded the warning closing up with steel shutters and storm shutters over any glass windows. By 6:00 PM most of the city's commerce was battened down for a riot which fortunately never happened.

The Riot Squad's intervention was totally unnecessary and actually provoked the resultant violence, but it may now be used as an excuse to bar the Opposition from demonstrating on Friday May 25 when the motion for the UHS loan goes to debate in the House. The demonstrators sought to let PM Musa know he is in check on this issue, but the wily prime minister may still have a few moves up his sleeve. Certainly he has the police violence squad at his service.



This floating casino "Midnight Gambler" was photographed recently at Stake Bank. What gives, Luke?

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