

The Independent

Reformer for the People

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Lone shark stalks the state

The PUP swept into office at the 1998 general election with an overwhelming victory. It apparently was no secret that Michael Ashcroft had donated \$1,000,000 to the PUP to help get the PUP elected into office. At the time the media set forth an alleged quote from Ashcroft which in substance stated that if he had known the PUP would do so well he would not have donated so much money!

Michael Ashcroft fared well thereafter. In response to bad press that Michael Ashcroft was receiving in Britain that suggested that he was exercising an unhealthy control over Belize. The Government of Belize sent an open letter in the form of a press release to the British newspapers. The letter exalted Ashcroft's alleged virtues. The letter, dated 19 July 1999, ended with the statement "the British press should either produce evidence to substantiate



Great White sighted offshore

its allegations or cease this campaign of smear and whispering, which not only stains the reputation of Michael Ashcroft

but puts at risk the economy and livelihood of the Belizean people".

Michael Ashcroft was served well by the Government of Belize's letter, he became Lord Ashcroft.

Ashcroft has continued to do well. The Government, at great expense, made a large land fill in the waters opposite the Marine Parade. It is now contended that an Ashcroft interest owns the well located and extremely valuable property.

The Government has relieved Ashcroft interests from the payment of \$16,000,000 in taxes that were due. The GOB contends that this was a settlement of a suit brought by Ashcroft interests. The merits, if any, of the suit were never litigated.

A money laundering scandal was made public in Belize, it appeared that Ashcroft interests were then the largest money launders in the Country,

laundering many millions. Allegations were made that the money laundering was accomplished with funds from the narcotics trade. Such allegations were not pursued by the Government, consequently, they were never shown to be true or not. The Musa government, only last Friday, introduced a proposed piece of legislation in the House of Representatives, supposedly to tighten the practices in the offshore industry.

If the allegation had been true the money launders would have been aiding and abetting the narcotic dealers, a very high brow crime. However, the matter was hushed up and there was never any prosecution.

The PUP attempted to use the tax payer's money to pay Ashcroft's interest the sum of \$34,000,000 to settle a questionable private debt. An (Please Turn To Page 5) 

The straw that broke the camel's back

Last Friday had promised to be a powder keg ready to explode with people power, Ghandi-style. No, not the infamous legal counsel in Ministry of Finance but the late great Mahatma Gandhi. Peaceful people power.

The people, with the full backing of the Unions, the Council of Churches, and the powerhouse Chamber of Commerce won over the business interests of chief crony and the bagmen. With that backing the mouse was cornered, ministers fleeing from his side in droves.

Heavy threats by the business community not only to shut down business on Friday but with promises to collectively withhold paying taxes for 30 days was the real deal breaker for Musa & the boys. The business community caught his attention real fast with that promise to bring down his house of cards. And we are sure the International observes threw a couple of barbs to remind him what this will mean to his



The mood at Friday's demonstration was more relaxed, even the police were smiling!

longevity in office.

Last week we suggested other economic pressures like boycotting a certain bank or two, a certain health facil-

ity, and more drastic measures. I still think the business community should gradually steer clear of a certain bank that has threatened ACB members and

anyone else who joins their lawsuit. This would send the the message that megalomania will not be tolerated, English titles or no.

So while everyone did their share to create public awareness, it was the powerful Chamber of Commerce, in our view, that forced Musa to stand down and stand his rabble-rouser Jefferies down. He should apologize to the Belizean people for allowing himself to become a pawn in the power struggle. Treachery of this nature deserves just one swift disciplinary action.

There is more treachery coming down the Musa pipeline as he prepares his golden parachute for his grand exit...to Miami, or will it be Panama? Houses have been prepared in both places for his very cushy retirement, deposed-dictator style.

Long live the Belize Chamber of (Please Turn To Page 13) 

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Skeletons coming out of the closet

Dear Editor,

As I sat listening to the radio broadcast of the events unfolding in Belmopan Friday last, it was all I could do to keep from bursting into tears, especially when the teargas started to fly and the smashing started. What is happening to this beautiful country? What is to become of it - its environment, its culture and especially the people themselves, the youths and children?

Under the weight of discussion about UHS other issues are slipping through. By what process was the mortgage of the Mahogany Heights development settled so that homeowners could get title? The continuation for the passage for the construction for the Vaca Falls dam, something I'd be willing to bet most people did not realize was already well underway? How is the free school text project going to be financed? And what will happen to the many individuals of Benque who work for BRC and Deacon Cal can't sell his text books? How about the destruction of the environment in the Reserve by the oil company? Everyday it seems more undisclosed deals surface.

Concerning the UHS situation, I don't think anyone is arguing with the contention that Belize needs more and better tertiary medical care. What people are angry about is how this all came into being. No one person, or even two or three, should have the right to mortgage the future of a country's children without consultation with the parents of these children. At the very least the law says the cabinet has to be consulted. An act done illegally cannot be made legal after the fact!! The children of this country will be bent double with the burden of the "supa bond" and now this, for

the next 25 years. And there won't be any more debts entertained between now and then? We all know there will be; new ones are added each day.

One news article stated a number of cases where UHS had given free care to a number of Belizeans. How was this possible? Only because other patients were paying the high fees allowed this charity to happen. I am sure, as another said, that hundreds have benefited from the care at UHS, especially kidney patients. But it is also true that hundreds of others have had to leave for Mexico, Guatemala and the US because they could not afford prices here. This is happening right now. Others are dying because they cannot find the wherewithal to get treatment in any place.

When asked just what was included in this UHS deal, what the public purse was expected to get for their money, Hon. Marin listed several properties. I have no idea how the land was acquired, whether it is personal property of the individuals concerned or belongs to the group, but we saw that the other two health care facilities were instituted immediately as the NHI was announced. How have they fared? UHS itself has obviously not made a profit from NHI fees only, how did these other two keep up-or did they?

There is a great need for tertiary care but there is an even greater need for primary and secondary basic care. There are continued complaints about basic medication not being available in the clinics. San Ignacio will no longer have a hospital but a "polyclinic"- what in heaven's name does that mean? I suppose it means that everything the least bit serious will be sent to KMH. Do they realize how difficult it will be for family and friends to visit patients? You are worried about your family member and then you have to endure a 6 hour

bus ride, crammed up and uncomfortable, then a taxi, which costs even more for the short trip than the bus does!!

Hon. Marin mentioned the need for preventive education. On that point I couldn't agree with him more. As a health care professional I have advocated the prevention of illnesses, whether medical or dental (and they are intimately connected) on numerous occasions. I see these little kids each morning coming to school and the first thing they do is run across to the snack shop and come out with all this junk (I will not call it food)- all this sugar and fat. And then teachers wonder why they are so hyper all day long!! Yes high blood pressure, heart disease in its various manifestations and diabetes are ravaging the older, and not so old, population but these are preventable diseases which have their beginnings at a very

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Dey Gastu Go

By: Alfred Ramirez

We are told that Constitution is the Supreme Law of Belize and that absolutely nothing, NADA is bigger than the Constitution of Belize.

Yet we see on a regular basis how government and select individuals in the private sector openly and arrogantly ignore and defy provisions of the Constitution and the Laws of Belize. I note that in the last five to six years in particular, issues of national importance related to the development of the people and the country of Belize have raised the concern over the abuse of Constitutional Rights and the Rule of Law in several instances of government dealings both on international and local levels. Belizeans are all too familiar with the Prosser BTL deal, the INTELCO deal, the privatization deals, the land deals, the UHS deal, the BNE deal and the questionable decisions made at the highest levels of the Law, and more recently the open defiance of Supreme court rulings, by private moguls.

Crimes of all types, blue and white collar are escalating and spreading into our towns and villages. Our leaders, those we elect to manage our local and national affairs, are regularly caught with their hands in the till. Those who are well connected through politics or social and economic status often get away Scot-free or with only a slap on the wrist

along with an admonishments to simply follow the money, and try not to get caught next time.

It is abundantly clear to any keen observer everything is falling apart here in Belize and that the Ruling Party and the loyal opposition can't seem to do anything about the ongoing deterioration of the state of the country's affairs.

The government continues to sell away our national assets under the guise of privatization and/or development while lawlessness escalates. It seems to be a hopeless situation since the corridors of power in Belmopan reek with corruption double dealing, back stabbing, secret deals, questionable legislative rulings etc. etc. And the loyal opposition simply goes on pontificating, hollering, bitching and promising to do better when they get into power.

Power seems to be the driving force behind the opposition's bid to govern and manage the affairs of Belize this time around. And the desperation by the party to hold onto that POWER at any cost is clearly the driving force behind their bid to continue their mismanagement, their double dealings their disrespect of citizens rights and indeed the downward spiraling of Belize into chaos and anarchy.

How do we stop this greed for power? This ongoing deterioration of our way of life in this jewel?

SIMPLE! By the determination to and

the will to cast our VOTE in the next general election for a new covenant, with a select group of individuals, 29 or so who have the country's physical, social economic, moral and spiritual well being at heart.

The old guards in both the P.U.P. and the U.D.P. must go. They gastu go because they simply do not have the cohones to implement and effect meaningful changes to the existing parliamentary system we have been living with in the last 25 years.

Recall that Belizeans have tried both the U.D.P. and the P.U.P. administrations and neither one has been able to address what I call the color parliamentary system which is clearly is not working for all the citizens of Belize.

Is it not ironic that the P.U.P. won the 1998 general election under the banner of REFORM? Recall that they promised political reform (whatever that means to them) and power to the people at that time.

I quote from the 1998 P.U.P. manifesto. Remember they were then opposition:

"The U.D.P. rulers have shown that they are bent on achieving absolute power whether by hijacking the House of Representatives or by manipulating the judiciary system.!

Ministers commit crimes, squander the country's resources and ride

roughshod over the people. Their administration has provided the strongest arguments for urgent political reform".

BASED ON THAT PROMISE and of course other political promises, but more so the promise of REFORM the Belizean people voted the P.U.P. into power with a resounding majority in the last general election.

It is now over ten (10) years, yes ten looong years since the promise of political reform, and we find today that the P.U.P. administration have shown that they are hell bent on achieving absolute power whether by hijacking the House of Representatives or by manipulating the judicial system. Ministers commit crimes, squander the country's resources and rule roughshod over the people.

Prophetic! Or just the law of Karma at work?

The Belizean voters can now say, just as the P.U.P. opposition of 1998 said at the time –

THIS ADMINISTRATION HAS PROVIDED THE STRONGEST ARGUMENTS FOR POLITICAL REFORM.

Indeed in a united and resounding voice through the ballot, every Belizean citizen must say: This administration gastu go come next general election.

LAAD! POWER TO THE PEOPLE

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Not a monster



By: Karla Heusner Vernon

It was like a last minute reprieve of a death sentence. Just hours before thousands converged on Belmopan to tell the Prime Minister “NO” to UHS and extension no to Ashcroft’s Belize Bank, the man withdrew the controversial motion. Said he would seek a buyer for the private hospital, would work with the private sector to find a solution that will not affect the tax payers.

Some were disappointed. They wanted a showdown at high noon between the two party heads, wanted to see if their Area Reps would mutiny and get kicked out. They wanted to see some action, watch someone punch the PM down (figuratively speaking)- not have him simply walk away. Belizeans

wanted to blow the trumpets and watch the walls come tumbling down...the money lenders chased from the temple.

Yes, others were relieved, believing he did it because he FINALLY saw reason, or more importantly to the masses,

the diasporic community!

If he was not amazed at the open defiance of a normally compliant people, the rest of us certainly were. Amazed and proud. For the first time in a very long time.

“.. It would be nice if he did it simply out of a sense of decency, the realization his people have punished enough.”

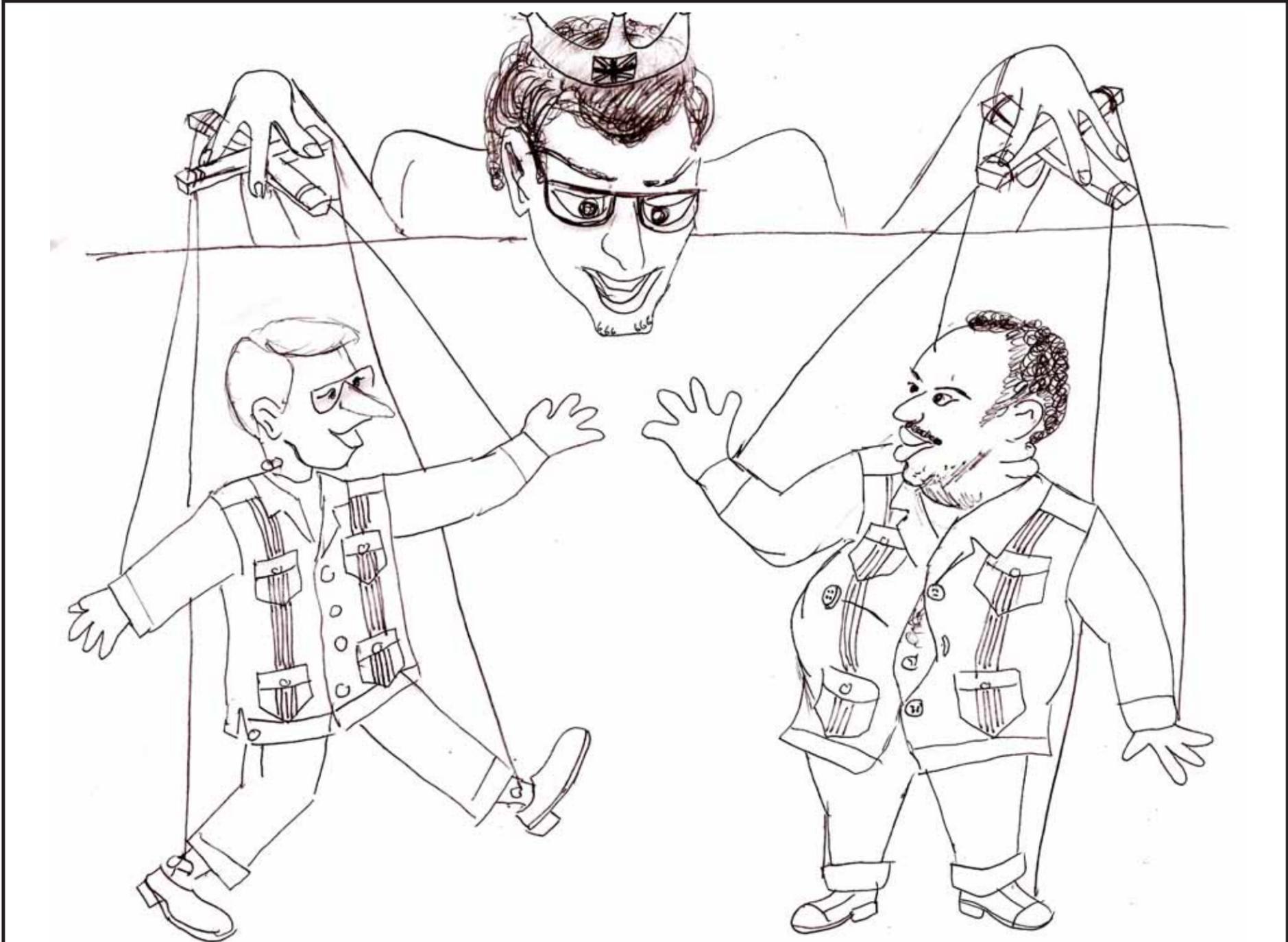
he finally heard and abiding by the will of The People. Ordinary people. People who voiced their opinions in a SPEAR poll, cast ballots in an unofficial referendum and flooded the talk shows with their calls and text messages. People who, for once, did not hide behind their anonymity and fear, or even their location in another country. In fact, on Thursday, you might say it was the “Belize Americans” who became the most vociferous of the UHS opponents, one set from Los Angeles even threatening to turn him back at the International Airport if he dared to come there for a visit or to solicit funds from

Some will say that being a church going man, there was some divine intervention, or at least, some intervention from the clergy. That he was guided in his choice through prayerful thought and the level-headedness of the church elders. Perhaps he sought their counsel during the tumultuous week precisely to be assured that withdrawing the motion was in fact a show of strength, not weakness. Perhaps their guidance helped him see a out of the darkness. That would be nice. Good people would be happy about that.

More cynical people will say he is a master chess player who is just, once

more, pulling another fancy move from his repertoire. That the Guarantee is not off the table just because it was not “ordered to lay on the table” in the National Assembly this week. That it will reappear in new raiment, a cloak of invisibility which covers it better, keeps its feet from sticking out like the last one did, exposing the secret deal to the censure of the community. The Carnival contract was nothing compared to this one, although it too was brought to light by whistleblowers willing to risk their income and positions. Are there other guarantees out there? Besides the one shared with us by 7 News already?

The true unbelievers are now suggesting Jules could create a 24 hour drop box for public servants to anonymously leak out documents. In return they could receive fresh toner cartridges for the copy machines now weary of the sheer volume of reproductions going on as officers in various departments gather evidence as we head into the election season, party loyalists armed with document (Please Turn To Page 13)



We PUPpets dance to my Lord's every whim and fancy! He says jump, we ask how high?

Charting a Focused Course



By: Trevor Vernon

The Independent Reformer Weekly, Belize rebel's paper, is pleased to announce we are celebrating our sixth month of publication. We have been warmly received, not only by readers in Belize but readers all over the globe. In fact the numbers coming in from our four web hosts indicate Independent Weekly was being downloaded at a rate of almost 150,000 times per month. Thus far, this far exceeds our initial expectations and vastly outstrips our hard copy circulation in country.

Our online version in pdf format is also now being produced in color and is an easy-to-navigate set of pages in which all advertisements appear prominently. In fact, the first thing almost all new advertisers ask is, "Will this ad appear on the internet in colour too?" The answer is always yes.

In terms of mailed subscriptions, this is growing steadily as new subscribers join our roster daily. Many have indicated they are buying a subscription due

to difficulty in obtaining the paper in shops or from vendors, since political elements continue to try and sabotage the distribution network. We had confirmed reports the paper was being burned in at least three locations by status quo political operatives.

In addition, there are concerns about the large amount of newsprint a newspaper consumes and its effects on the environment and deforestation, generally. We are often challenged with returns, as is other newspaper houses. What they do with their returns is anyone's guess. We want to be responsible with the disposal of bulk paper.

As we enter phase II of our business/distribution plan it is clear to us that the future of the paper lies online and with our subscribers and advertisers... a situation which mirrors, in many respects, recent trends in larger, prestigious metropolitan and local newspapers worldwide.

Therefore, we are taking the bold decision at this juncture to take the plunge and go primarily electronic from here on in, with a smaller, hard copy production limited to a select group of subscribers. This would be mailed to both those who have supported us from the beginning and those who wish to climb on board now. This way we will not risk disenfranchising loyal readers who may not have internet access, or

through a sense of traditional joy of reading a "real" newspaper. We are looking for ways to show our appreciation to readers, contributors, and supporters of the rebel venture.

We are in the process of developing our own website, but will of course continue to be immensely grateful for the hosting by those guardians of the free press: www.belizenorth.com, www.belizenews.com and www.belizean.com. It is thanks to them that so MANY Belizeans and friends of

Belize find our paper each and every week.

We believe this is a good compromise for our readers, better for the environment, and the best way to ensure our readership as the advertising base grows, unimpeded by those in power who want to prevent Belizeans from having access to diverse views and critical, thought provoking essays about our beloved, but endangered country.

Lone shark stalks the state

➡ (Continued From Page 1)
outlay over twenty five years that would have saddled the people with about \$112 MILLION dollars. PM Musa very wisely withdrew the bill to take on the UHS private debt.

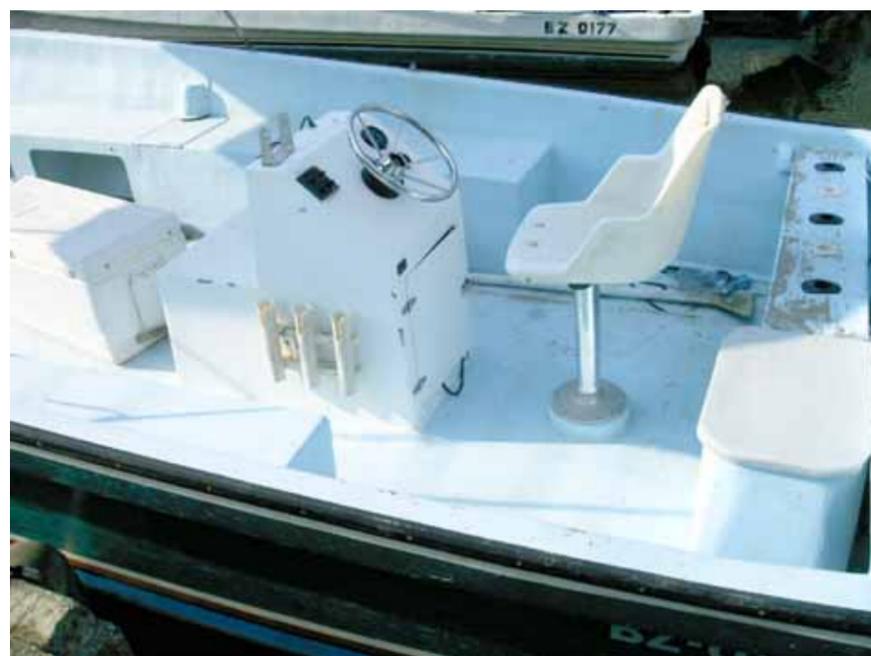
The PUP now wishes to pass the BTL Vesting Act. They are doing this in an attempt to escape the effect of a Supreme Court order installing Jeff Prosser as BTL Chairman. The effect of the act could disenfranchise thousands of small BTL shareholders.

To add insult to injury the PUP is attempting to make the change which will involve the transfer of property that would normally require the payment of taxes in the vicinity of \$12,000,000. The Lord wants the transfer to be without the payment of the tax, naturally. All

other citizens of Belize are required pay transfer taxes; however, the PUP now wants to exempt Ashcroft interests from the payment such taxes, yet again. Is the Lord's transactions now fully tax exempt? When was the last time any of his interests paid any taxes to benefit the people of this country? Yet he continues to make big money contributions and loans to the PUP.

Ashcroft interests appear to stand better with the Prime Minister than the interest of the people. Was the British Press right? It makes one wonder what the real dynamic was behind the pulling of BBC from the airways in Belize. The question now really is to what extent is the Prime Minister compromised? And how he has paid for his new mansion in the United States.

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Belize's Lack of Environmental Planning increases Hurricane Vulnerability



By: Nadja Chamberlain

Belize's hurricane season is here and where your home is located and what has been done to your land can affect its vulnerability to hurricanes.

For thousands of years, mangrove forests have provided a natural buffer against cyclones, hurricanes, and other water-related events that affect the shore. Many articles have been written regarding the tsunami that originated near Sumatra, Indonesia, on 26 December 2004. The articles told of the areas that were not seriously affected because they had been protected by mangroves while areas where mangroves had been removed by humans were totally destroyed.

When a large volume of fast-moving water from either a hurricane surge or tsunami moves from deep water to shallow, the height of the water increases and tremendous damage is done when this mass of water contacts land. Many believe that the Barrier Reef completely protects Belize from storm surge, but it can engender storm surge as the mass of water rapidly moving through deep water hits the reef and the shallow waters on the lee side of the reef. In addition, bays can focus storm surges and increase their height and storm surges meeting flooding rivers become far more dangerous.

When Hurricane Wilma was in the Gulf of Mexico and heading for Florida in October of 2005, it was predicted that if it hit the west coast of Florida as



This aerial view shows homes built along the coast cleared of protective mangroves and the canal dug behind. A storm surge could wash across beach into canal and possibly divert the river.

a Category 4 storm, the shallow Gulf would help create a storm surge for parts of the Gulf Coast of 15 to 20 feet with heights of 25 feet up into the bays and rivers of the west coast of Florida.

Predictions for storm surge from hurricanes in Belize are as follows:

- Category 1 storm - 4 to 5 feet above normal tide level
- Category 2 storm - 6 to 8 feet above normal tide level
- Category 3 storm - 9 to 12 feet above normal tide level
- Category 4 storm - 13 - 18 feet above normal tide level
- Category 5 storm - more than 18 feet above normal tide level

The height of a river that is flooding from hurricane rains can be increased by storm surge approximately 5 feet for each hurricane category at and near the mouth of the river. How far upriver this additional height of water can have an effect can depend on land elevation, tide stage, and the amount of rain generated by the hurricane.

With these figures in mind, let's look at an area of Belize that has had recent development with little or no environmental planning. The area is on the southern coast to the north of a fairly large river mouth.

River mouths love to switch around as eroded material in the river is carried downstream and is deposited at the river mouth when the river reaches the sea and slows. However, the banks of the mouth of this particular Belizean river have been stabilized over many years by extensive old mangrove forests that have grown up on either side of the mouth, holding the land together. While the entry to the river is shallow from deposition of eroded materials, a narrow channel is maintained by dredging.

Referring to the images in the article, one can see that much of the old mangrove wetland forest that been holding the north riverbank together to within ½ mile of the river mouth has been removed for home sites. Since this Google Earth image was produced, a

road has been bulldozed and filled for additional home sites even closer to the river mouth.

This despite the fact it is a wetland area. Wetlands are identified by wetland soils, wetland species of vegetation, and yearly or seasonal presence of water. This land contained all of these wetland indicators plus the old mangroves yet all of this activity was permitted by the government.

Bulldozers came in and leveled all the wetland vegetation, including the very old, mature mangroves. One can see the remains of the mangrove forest on either side of this lot, the remnants of the wetland vegetation in the cleared area, the dark wetland soils, and the wet surface of the soil. The lots were filled by truckloads of sand brought in from inland in most instances. In other instances, sand was dredged from the sea just offshore and pumped onto the lots, a practice that causes erosion on adjacent beaches. In many cases, the lots

(Please Turn To Page 10) 



What happens when a Category 5 storm comes ashore in these bulldozed areas?

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Belize's Lack of Environmental Planning increases Hurricane Vulnerability

(Continued From Page 7) were bulldozed from the filled access road to the sea, including the dunes and dune vegetation. In most cases, any remaining dune vegetation that was helping the shoreline to stay in place after the bulldozers were finished was removed in a practice referred to by the homeowners as "cleaning the beach". The dunes had been protecting the land behind them and the dune vegetation had been holding the dunes in place and trying to rebuild destroyed dunes.

Recently has been even more destruction of mangroves and dunes in this area. Across the filled road to the home sites, a canal was dredged through mangroves to drain the land and one can see the dark wetland soils that had been dredged out of the canal and used for fill in this area. These are anaerobic soils that will subside as they are exposed to the air. Now the dredged canal meets the river

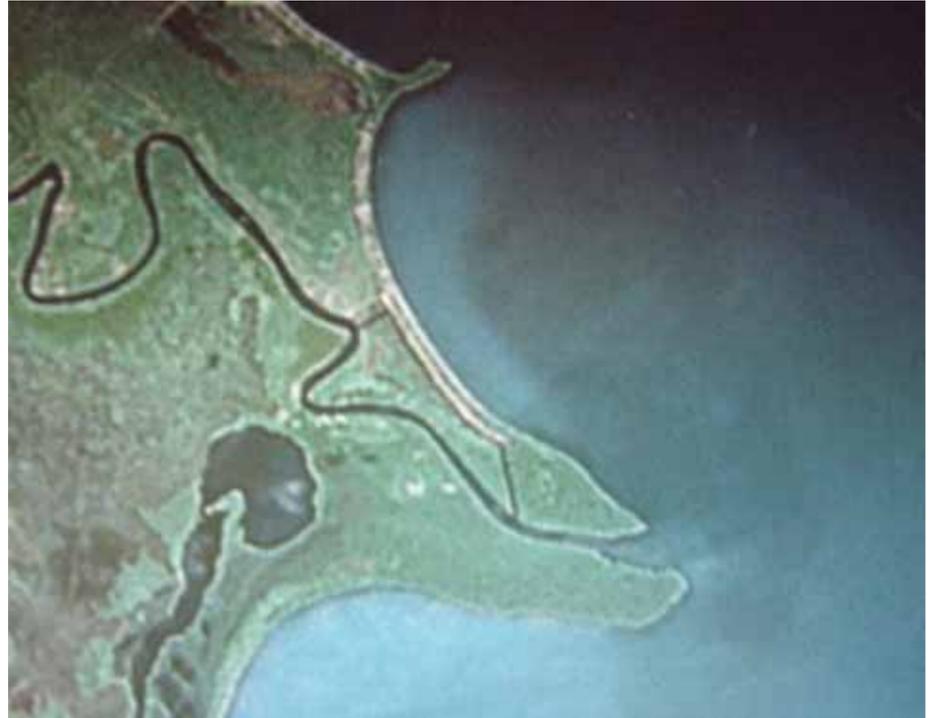
about 1,050 feet in back of the development

The river heading downstream takes a hard right angle turn just where the dredged canal meets the river. Also, at this turn of the river and adjacent to the dredged canal is a marina facility with gas pumps and tanks on site.

After studying satellite images of the changes, you need to begin to think about cause and effect. Suppose a Category 3 to 5 hurricane with storm surge of 9 to 18 feet comes ashore in this area? The shallows (lighter color water) and the small bay just offshore of this site will funnel and increase storm surge onto the land.

Questions:

Do you think that a river swollen with hurricane rains, blocked by shallow water at the river mouth, and running into oncoming storm surge entering the river will be able to make



This satellite photo shows the area of development on a small bay near the Sittee River mouth. Note the lighter color of shallow water and the bay, both of which would increase a storm surge.

this hard right turn?

Will part or all of the river turn into the dredged canal and meet and join forces with the hurricane surge coming across the land after coming ashore just 1300 feet away from the river?

Will this dredged canal be the path of least resistance?

Do you think a new mouth for the river might appear in the area where the mangroves have been removed?

Who would be responsible for damage in this area: The landowners who bought the land and accepted or ok'd these land practices? The contractors who brought down the mangrove forest and removed the dunes? The Government of Belize that permitted these practices?

Who will pay for the repairs of the damage to the new homes? The insurance companies (which would im-

pact everyone else's premiums in the future)? The Government of Belize (meaning the taxpayers)?

As usual, it is the average Belizean who will have to take the brunt for this lack of planning and the political atmosphere that allows the practices that have been outlined above. At this writing even more mangrove forest has been removed even closer to the river mouth in an area that had been previously designated as an Eco Preserve.

If we take care of our land, it will protect us. Taking away the very features that protect us only ensures our coastline is exposed to disaster. Belize must begin to do some serious environmental planning and tighten up its mangrove protection laws, permitting, and enforcement RIGHT NOW!
*Satellite image by Google Earth
Photographs by Christian Ziegler*



Dump truck carrying landfill along filled road

BAS celebrates 38 Years of Conservation - AGM at St. Herman's Blue Hole National Park

Belize City, Belize, Wednesday, May 22, 2007 - - The Belize Audubon Society (BAS) will host its 38th Annual General Meeting on Saturday, May 26, 2007 at the St. Herman's Blue Hole National Park. All BAS members are invited to attend the AGM and participate in the elections of four directors to the Board of Directors and the presentation of BAS' achievements for 2006.

According to BAS' Executive Director, Anna D. Hoare, the key achievements for the organization for 2006 was "the instituting of a new financial system based on cost accounting which quantifies the cost of implementing activities

and assists in making critical management decisions. This new financial system has led to greater financial transparency and accountability of BAS funds, and streamlining for greater operational efficiency. In addition, the organization has focused its efforts on building institutional capacity through staff development."

These important achievements have allowed BAS to improve its contribution to Belize's environmental, economic and social development through protected areas management, environmental education, advocacy and public policy, and community development.

Following the business part of the Annual General Meeting, members will have a range of recreational activities to participate in at St. Herman's Blue Hole National Park including birding, cave tubing, cave exploration and hiking, swimming and rock climbing.

The Society started holding its AGM at the protected areas it co-manages last year to build awareness of BAS on site management initiatives and foster appreciation for protected areas in Belize in the general public, and in particular, within BAS members.

The Belize Audubon Society helped establish Belize's first protected area at

Half Moon Caye, and now manages nine protected areas covering over 162,000 acres, on behalf of the people and Government of Belize. These protected areas include St. Herman's Blue Hole National Park, Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary (Jaguar Reserve), Crooked Tree Wildlife Sanctuary (Ramsar site), Guanacaste National Park, Halfmoon Caye Natural Monument (World Heritage Site), Tapir Mountain Nature Reserve, Blue Hole Natural Monument (World Heritage Site), Victoria Peak Natural Monument and Tapir Mountain Natural Monument.



Current Issues

Aikman versus Musa

By: Meb Cutlack

Derek Aiman's Covenant Movement poll, designed to see whether or not Belizeans accept the Government's guarantee of UHS debt to the Belize Bank, told a glaring truth to which the Prime Minister took the ostrich's way out by hiding his head in the sand.

Over 7 thousand people voted countrywide in the poll and, according to the P.M.'s usually tame radio station Love FM: "A total tally of the votes shows no support for the Government on the UHS issue. Of the 7 thousand 1 hundred and 43 votes that were cast, 7 thousand and 77 people voted 'no', and '63' people voted yes. Three of the ballots were spoilt."

Well, of course, the P.M.'s answer was that PUP did not vote! No PM, a lot of PUP supporters did vote. It is that, just like many members of your cabinet, they are against your illegal UHS manipulations.

The message for Mr. Musa on this issue and on the BTL issue could not be clearer. Belizeans of all walks of life are fed up with the PM catering to his local cronies and his foreign buddies at the expense of Belizeans.

A reminder PM, if you need it, of a speech by Minister Mark Espot back in June 2005 referring to BTL Minister Espot said: "This is the single largest privatization of a public asset in the history of this country. This is a matter of historical importance.

He then said: "I start with a quote from a US Justice, Mr. Brandeis, who wrote: 'the government is the potent, the omnipresent teacher. For good or ill it teaches the whole people by its example. Crime is contagious. If the government becomes the law breaker or the law bender, it breeds contempt for laws, it invites every man to become a law unto to himself...'

Mark Espot "It is important to..... look at the company's history and to speak frankly about how we got to this point. This is a time for plain speaking.

"For 15 years now, the Carlisle Group of companies, led by Mr. Michael Ashcroft and sporting various disguises such as the Belize Bank, the Belize Holdings and more recently, Mercury Investments, Pillow Talk and E-Com, has pursued a scorched earth campaign to gain control of Belize's most profitable public company - BTL.

"Throughout this conspiracy to control and suck dry BTL and its Belizean

consumers, it would appear that this government has been an all too willing accomplice. As it has appeared to the Belizean people, the relationship between the conspirator and his accomplice is a "Master-Puppet" relationship.

Mr. Espot went on to say: "The events of the past two years, starting when the government signed a secret memorandum of understanding to buyout the Carlisle 52% shareholding of BTL in October 2003, have proven beyond a reasonable doubt, just how costly and how wrong this incestuous relationship has been.

"It has damaged beyond belief our Party's grassroots credentials, our government's credibility and our country's reputation. The so-called investment climate at home and abroad has been sullied. This is a sad story, a tragedy of unbridled greed, of reckless disregard for the Belizean consumers and voters, a tale of the free market system at its worse.

"The BTL story chronicles the quest on behalf of Mr. Ashcroft to become "a permitted person" - permitted to illegally hold more than 25% of the com-

pany, permitted to extract tens of millions in management fees and deposits, permitted to withhold dividends from the hundreds of small Belizean shareholders, permitted to marginalize the Belizean management and staff, permitted to gouge the consumers, permitted to enjoy a monopoly, then permitted to obstruct interconnectivity and competition, permitted to avoid taxes, permitted to blur the line between onshore and offshore, permitted in short to act against the national interest of Belize."

Mr. Espot added: "It is absolutely clear to me, and it was made absolutely clear at the time BTL was first incorporated in its 1988 Prospectus for the Sale of Shares, that no person should hold more than 25%."

He went on to say: "The public prospectus declared: 'In order to prevent undue influence in the affairs of the company as the telecommunications operator in Belize, the Articles of Association contain provisions to limit shareholdings. With the exception of permitted persons, namely, a Minister of the Government, any person acting on the written authority of the Govern-

ment of Belize, a trustee of any employee share scheme and the holder of the "B" shares, no person shall be allowed to retain more than 25% of the voting capital of the Company."

In fact, as Mr. Espot pointed out at the time, Article 36 of BTL is actually entitled "Limitations on Shareholding" and this article deals extensively with the procedures that the Board shall employ to ensure that no one owns more than 25%. The article detailed the Board's obligations to dispose of any shares held by a person who exceeds the 25% limit.

There it is in black and white and not from anyone else but from a member of his PUP cabinet and yet, just this week, an even more insidious bill enshrining Michael Ashcroft's total control over BTL was pushed through the House.

This Bill, and a lot of other legislation passed by Mr Musa to help local cronies and foreign pals, has to be revisited by the next Government of Belize - otherwise this sort of supposedly legalized theft will stand as blank cheque for all future governments of Belize.

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WTP – PNP Alliance calls on leaders to take control of the country's affairs

We are again witnessing the actions of a constitutionally elected government with absolute power to impose its will against the wishes and the interest of the common people. This hated monster with its "hard head" is here to destroy our future and that of our children. Unless we destroy the undemocratic system that keeps this monster alive, it will destroy us all.

Cabinet is vested with absolute power for the full term of this Government and no matter what Belizeans think or say, it does not have to and will not submit itself to the public's outcry. This points to the urgent necessity for constitutional reform to remove Cabinet's absolute power and make it more controllable.

The announced intention of the Opposition to mobilize people into mass protest is only a convenient and impractical tool being used to regain political power. Yes, it is our democratic right to peaceful protest and to ventilate our anger and frustrations, but this is no guarantee that it will be successful.

The planned mass protest in Belmopan did not prevent this absolute power Government from taking the first steps to forcing the unjust and private UHS debt onto the backs of all Belizeans as was anticipated in the Guardian newspaper of Sunday, May 19th, 2007 edition, page 3. And the planned mass protests by the Opposition in the district towns and cities will not stop the Government from "passing the buck" either. And to quote the Hon. Dean Barrow, leader of the Opposition, "if the P.U.P. can successfully and lawfully gain approval from the National Assembly for the repayment of the UHS debt, a new government can hardly take that back." We must awaken to the fact that these "peaceful protests" are failing to have their desired effect and purpose and we must begin to explore other more effective and legal avenues we can turn to.

That legal avenue is constitutional reform. Let us look at our 1981 Constitution, Chapter VI, Page 51.

The Legislature, Section 55

Establishment of Legislature 55 There shall be in and for Belize a Legislature which shall consist of a National Assembly comprising two Houses, that is to say, A House of Representatives and a Senate.

Composition of House of

Representatives Sec 56 (1) Subject to the provisions of this Section, the House of Representatives shall consist of eighteen members who shall be elected in the manner provided by law.

(House members were increased to

29 and further increased to 31 for the 2008 general elections.)

(Note too that it was the P.U.P. constitutional architects that ensured direct elections for House members and a sufficiently large Cabinet drawn from among these same House members to guarantee them absolute power.)

Now let us look at Sec 61, Page 57

The Senate

Composition of Senate The Senate shall consist of eight members (in this constitution referred to as "Senators") who shall be appointed by the Governor General acting in accordance with the advice of the Prime Minister. (The Senate members have been increased to twelve, 6 appointed on the advice of the Prime Minister, 3 on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition and 3 on the advice of Civil Society.

Since the introduction of the non-elected Senate, it has consistently been hijacked by the P.U.P, and in turn by the U.D.P. Despite the shenanigans, the Senate merely executes the will of Cabinet, becomes its Rubber Stamp, powerless to oppose the raising and spending of public revenues. It cannot and will never effectively defend the interest of the people.

It is the P.U.P. and the U.D.P. that have subordinated the unelected Senate to the wishes of Cabinet, preventing this country for so long from having a government with true "separation of powers" with each House checking the other before any law can be passed.

It is and shall always be the other House of the National Assembly, an elected Senate by the people that shall forever have the constitutional authority of the people to always say no, no, no to any unjust and oppressive Bill of Law.

We must reclaim and free the Senate now and make it a real upright and firm

"House" of the National Assembly. It belongs to the people. We must begin to freely elect our Senators to represent us, and not the Prime Minister nor the Opposition nor special interest.

Now is the time to renew our commitment to this with even more vigour and let our voices ring along the entire length and breadth of this land so that the Prime Minister, the right Hon. Said Musa and the Leader of the opposition Hon. Dean Barrow and other upcoming leaders that they must take this stand to prove to the Belizean people that they truly hold allegiance to them. We call on them to endorse and introduce the constitutional amendments necessary for an elected Senate and to do this before the 2008 general election. Otherwise, history will not be kind to them.

We invite Senator Godwin Hulse and his distinguished colleagues, Senator Rene Gomez and Senator Moises Chan to join us in leading this national campaigning to "free the Senate." We invite all former Senators too to help us to rid ourselves of this frustrating non-elected Senate. We invite them to recall how many times they were whipped into line with the reminder by the leader of government business in the Senate that as appointed Senators they could not oppose the will of the elected Government.

We invite Senator Godwin Hulse to take the necessary steps to introduce three motions at the next sitting of the Senate:

1. A motion to amend the Constitution for a freely elected Senate.
2. A motion to amend the Constitution for direct elections of the next Prime Minister.
3. A motion calling on the Prime Minister to hold a national Referendum for the people to express through the ballot their support or otherwise for both proposed constitutional amendments.

We further extend this invitation to all Belizeans that have expressed their open support for an elected Senate and to those in the media and in other responsible positions, namely

Mr. Jorge Espat, former Minister of Government

Mr. Francis Gegg, W.T.P.R.M., Founder

Mr. Harry Lawrence, The Reporter
Mr. Meb Cutlack, The Independent Reformer

Mr. Russel Vellos, Amandala, Chief Editor

Ms. Adele Ramos, Assistant Editor
Mr. Mose Hyde, KREM Radio and Television, Manager

Mr. Trevor Vernon, The Independent Reformer, Manager

Mrs. Karla Heusner Vernon, Independent Reformer, Editor

Mr. Derek Aikman, former Minister of Government

Mr. Bert Tucker, International Consultant

Mr. Kevin Herrera, Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry, General Manager

Mr. Henry G. Gordon, Former Cabinet Secretary

Ms. Candice Pitts, Student and Writer

Mr. Frankie Rys, Teacher and Activist

Mr. Rene Villanueva, Love Radio and Television, Owner

Mr. Jules Vasquez, Channel 7 News, Journalist

Mr. Stewart Krohn, Channel 5 News, Manager

Ms. Zenaida Moya, Belize City Mayor

The Presidents and Secretary Generals of all Labour Unions

The Chairmen of SPEAR and all other N.G.Os of Belize.

The members of the A.C.B.

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by: Leslie

Acting US Permanent Representative to the OAS speaks on the rule of law

The following are highlights of an intervention by Margarita Riva Geoghegan at a recent Permanent Council Meeting at the Organization of American States, of which Belize is a member.

The United States is a nation that follows the rule of law. The United States has a separation of powers – an independent judiciary, an independent legislative, and an independent executive branch. The judiciary system of the United States has taken a position on this, and we ask that the Government of Venezuela respect that decision.

However, I want to start, Mr. Chairman, and make clear, as we have in the past, U.S. policy on counterterrorism. It is clear: It is as we said the last time that Venezuela raised this same issue. We condemn terrorism and terrorists, irrespective of the cause they pretend to espouse. In the “Declaration of Panama on the Protection of Critical Infrastructure in the Hemisphere in the Face of Terrorism,” which was adopted earlier this Spring by all OAS Member States – except Venezuela – states agreed to continue to build on the spirit of multilateral cooperation in order to prevent, combat, and eliminate terrorism in all of its forms through the protection of critical infrastructure. In this, my delegation firmly agrees.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, the Member States of the OAS have worked in concert to strengthen our ability to confront the threats of terrorism. The hemisphere has strengthened its institutional capacity to help prevent the threats from becoming real. For example, the OAS adopted at the June 2002 General Assembly the Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism, expanding our legal obligations to work together to both prevent and respond to terrorism. Today, 22 states, including the United States, are State parties to the Convention. The activities of the Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism (CICTE) – along with the Inter-American Convention Against Terrorism – constitute a strong institutional foundation for our hemispheric fight against terrorism.

Our government has demonstrated time and again that it is fully committed to preventing terrorists from establishing a safe haven from which to attack. Mr. Chairman, in reference to Venezuela’s draft declaration before the Permanent Council today, the United States’ position is that this is a bilateral issue between two OAS Member States. It is not a multilateral issue that needs discussion here. In fact, as I stated before, the tone and substance of the distinguished delegate of Venezuela clearly makes that point for us. We do not believe this declaration has a place before this body today.

Turning to the public allegations on the



US Permanent Representative to the OAS Margarita Riva Geoghegan addresses a recent OAS Permanent Council Meeting.

case of Mr. Posada Carriles made by the Government of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, we categorically reject these characterizations and specific accusations. We would, however, make the following points: The United States has taken a number of actions with respect to Luís Posada Carriles. In taking these steps, the United States has acted consistently with international law as well as its domestic legal framework that provides for due process and various constitutional safeguards. As with all democracies around the world that follow the rule of law, these safeguards provide that an individual cannot be brought for trial or extradited unless sufficient evidence has been established that he committed the offense charged. In the United States, this standard is described as “probable cause.”

Mr. Chairman, here is a brief overview of the steps the United States has taken with respect to Posada within this legal framework: Posada entered the United States illegally in early 2005. Posada was detained by immigration authorities in the United States on May 17, 2005, and he was, in accordance with U.S. law, placed in removal proceedings. The immigration judge who handled the removal proceedings ordered that Posada be removed from the United States on September 27, 2005. This order remains in effect. The United States has been seeking ways — and continues to seek ways — to implement it consistent with the terms of the order and U.S. regulations that implement the obligations of the United States under the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

Specifically, at the time the immigration judge ordered Posada removed, the immigration judge also determined that Posada could not be removed to either Cuba or Venezuela, as it was more likely than not that he would be tortured if he were so transferred. The United States would, however, be prepared to transfer

Posada in accordance with U.S. law to another country with terrorism-related charges against him.

Moreover, the United States sought and obtained a criminal indictment charging Posada with violations of our immigration laws. The federal district court – a part of the United States’ independent judiciary – handling that case issued a decision on May 8, 2007 dismissing the indictment. The United States is currently reviewing that decision and its options for challenging it. Posada also remains under investigation for past activities. In the meantime, Posada remains subject to the

order of removal issued by the immigration judge and is without legal status in the United States. He is also subject to an Order of Supervision from the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which imposes certain restrictions on Posada, including reporting and monitoring requirements.

The United States would like to underscore that the recent U.S. court decision to drop immigration-related charges was made by the independent judiciary of the United States and that decision is being reviewed by U.S. law enforcement authorities, including the Department of Justice, to evaluate all options. In sum, the United States continues to be engaged in an ongoing series of actions, consistent with our legal requirements and due process, with respect to Mr. Posada.

Mr. Chairman, we are a nation governed under the rule of law, with a strict separation of powers and a fiercely independent judiciary, of which we are very proud. It is unfortunate that this case is being presented by Venezuela, willfully ignoring the efforts the United States has made to detain Mr. Posada that are on-going, and our firm resolve and commitment in the global fight against terror.

To close, let me just sum up. Immigration charges were dismissed. The Department of Justice is examining that. He is effectively still under house arrest and (Please Turn To Page 13) 

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Teenage Pregnancy

By: Julia Heusner

Each year millions of teenagers become pregnant world wide. In Belize, 1/4 of babies are born to mothers under the age of 20. Today, teenagers experience sexuality and often respond to their feelings in an irresponsible way. In their hearts and minds they feel that they're in love, when it is usually infatuation. Teenagers now must decide whether to engage in sexual activity or abstain, use contraception, have an abortion, keep the baby or put it up for adoption. Birth control is 98 % effective and so are condoms, so putting the two protections together is highly ef-



fective but against some religious beliefs. Most teenagers really do not understand how big of a life change they will undergo. The numbers of teenage pregnancy is very high but when

you think about it most could have been prevented with the use of protection. Some people may not afford condoms but if you cannot afford a condom you cannot afford a baby. Children from runways by teenage mothers go through a hard time in life. Teenage mothers have no time for other things; because they are busy taking care of their baby. Most teen mothers end up dropping out of high school, because they do not have time for school anymore. They work for low wages to make money and sup-

port the child. Some teenagers try to stay in school to have a good image, so that other people in school do not look at them as a pregnant teenager but as just one of them. Another risk of having sex is that you might catch an STD. When teenagers plan to have intercourse, they should think about whether or not they could handle a baby.



ARIES (Mar. 21- April 20)

Your mate will appreciate your honesty. You have so much to offer; open up and let your thoughts be known. If you've taken on a lot of work, be sure to leave some time for yourself and family. Social events will be plentiful. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

TAURUS (Apr. 21- May 21)

You will not impress others by being foolishly generous. Opportunities to get ahead are evident. Look for professional guidance if it will help unite the family. Changes in your domestic scene are evident. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21)

You will have splendid suggestions for fund raising events. Your boss may not be in the best of moods this week. Don't let the erratic behavior of someone you live with interfere with your professional performance. You need to distance yourself from the situation for a little while first. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Avoid friction with your mate. Try to avoid serious discussions with loved ones. Travel for business or pleasure will be enlightening. Involvement in groups will be favorable and lead to valuable information. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

LEO (July 23-Aug 22)

You are likely to be left alone if you aren't willing to bend just a little. Real estate investments will be profitable. You need to spend some time getting to know this person all over again. Expect some flak. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 -Sept. 23)

Opportunities for new partnerships will develop through the organizations you encounter. Get busy putting your place in order. You may be upset if someone has borrowed something that belongs to you. There may be opportunities to attend social functions that are linked to work. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 -Oct. 23)

Travel could bring you the adventure and excitement you require. Don't let

relatives stand in the way of your personal plans. The existing problems must be dealt with one way or another. Be firm when dealing with matters pertaining to your environment. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)

You should avoid getting involved in the personal problems of colleagues. Promote your ideas now. A need to be in love may fool you. Social get-together will bring you in contact with intelligent new friends. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 -Dec. 21)

You may find yourself in an uncomfortable situation if you have overloaded your plate unintentionally. Be prepared to have relatives or close friends introduce you to new and exciting individuals. Realize that you don't have to do everything yourself. Ferret out information that will hold them responsible. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22.- Jan. 20)

Self-deception about relationships is a problem. Keep your feet on the ground, if you can. You will be in the mood for competition, and your ability to lead a group will bring you popularity. Your creative ideas must be put to good use. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 -Feb. 19)

You are best not to confront situations that deal with in-laws or relatives. Your emotional partner will push the right buttons this week. Check your personal papers and make sure everything is in order. You can accomplish a lot if you deal with other people's money or possessions this week. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

PISCES (Feb. 20-Mar. 20)

Don't sign up for too many extra activities or you'll have trouble fulfilling your obligations. Take time to deal with authority figures or government agencies. Be considerate and avoid being overly opinionated, or arguments will ensue. Chances are you could get stuck with a colleague's job unexpectedly. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

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TOPICAL TIDBITS

The PM—did in fact evacuate his immediate family to US, but only the Musa side. At least only Musa side on the same plane. Second wife was at House Meeting.

Word is that PM spent several nights sleeping at APC under guarded protection. (Foolish if there was a military coup...) Last time around he stayed in the presidential suite at the Princess Hotel & Casino in Belize City, top floor. And he gets on a BDF chopper to get



The controversial Supt. Crispin Jeffries



Television cameramen Alfonso Noble (left) and his brother (right) stood their ground to report the events of demonstrations on May 18 and 25 and were targeted by the Police for their job dedication.

to Belmopan for the last two Friday Meetings of the House of Representatives.

Reports are he recently purchased a spread for \$US5Million in the USA. Wonder where all that "plata" came from? Prime Ministerial salaries must have gone up...

Congrats to Acting Commissioner of Police Maureen Leslie for standing her ground and refusing to let the controversial Crispin Jeffries anywhere near the National Assembly and protestors on May 25th. The walls have ears and heard him insist he would be out there and challenge her authority. Just let him try to grab her around the neck as he did a civilian woman on the Bel-China Bridge in January, 2005...plenty of cameramen around willing to get that on tape.

Speaking of cameramen, GOB's attempts to muzzle the media and keep

images of brutality against protestors off the tv and internet went way too far over the past two weeks. Swipes at Romero, arrest of Ellis then the Noble brothers....good thing for the cops they didn't have any hidden cameras on them while in lockdown. Now THAT would be newsworthy coverage.

Please be reminded Minister of Home Affairs that Belize has signed an international convention on Freedom of the Press and these things are monitored abroad. No doubt the complaints have already been filed with the Inter-American Press Association. Certainly they should be recorded with the Human Rights Commission here in Belize. These Castro-esque tactics against the free media should alarm us all. But thank you gentlemen for not only bravely facing the rioters but also the oppressors to give us a glimpse of the new reality.

What's wrong with these Ministers

locking up journalists on suspicion of whatever and then releasing them with any charge or worse any apology?

Seems like Ash has the goods on Musa & Fonseca; he gets them to do as he wishes to protect his interests. Word is he hands them the draft legislation he needs passed in our house of representatives. They pass all the legislation the British Lord demands...at the expense of the people of Belize. Wonder if he can pull that stunt in the UK?

Heard Lady Speaker is upset at the exposed special family relationship she has with the PM. When will the opposition reveal the special family relationship she has with the British Lord? And she is right too when she said that the opposition didn't object when she was being appointed. Barrow should have objected then...as he should when Musa's other family were being appointed all over the place.

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Information Security

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Single \$23BZD, Double \$33BZD,
Triple \$48BZD
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Main & Church Streets, walk down
hill 75 yards to Guesthouse.

Not a monster

☛ (Continued From Page 4)
shredders working late into the night..

Was it the threat of further exposure that prompted him to back off on UHS? Or was that less of a consideration than the need for a peaceful house meeting to ensure the passage of the BTL Vesting Bill? What is \$33 to \$100M compared to the loss of BTL to an American?

Or was it another threatened loss, that of business and sales tax for at least a month that did the trick? The Chamber's call for a one day business closure was peanuts compared to their call for a delay in tax payments. Would such a thing have crippled the economy? Might have at least kept GOB from meeting payroll...then there is the risk some BCCI members might have simply not resumed paying again later, continue their civil disobedience or joined the the big boys in their indefinite tax exemptions..

Then again, maybe it all just got too personal. Maybe the Prime Minister began to fear for his safety and that of his family.

Maybe he feared his loss of reputation internationally, specifically among CARICOM and SICA members, some of who made private jokes and inquiries with local press about how long "can he keep his government?" Surely the Barnett resignation and threatened resignations of a good chunk of his cabinet must have opened him to speculation about his leadership, and methods of doing government business.

It is hard to say what prompted his move, there were so many pressures. It would be nice if he did it simply out

of a sense of decency, the realization that his people have punished enough under his tax regime, are suffering enough from an unsustainable cost of living and price of fossil fuels.

If he did indeed wake up that Thursday morning and think to himself, "I have really screwed things up, I wonder what came over me? If change my ways can I win back their respect and loyalty? Win myself a third term?"

Perhaps his comments to one of the tv stations that he is "not a monster" are an indication he is finally beginning to understand that the public has not only lost confidence in his leadership, they now consider him a villain in the national drama. See him now as an overseer oppressing the slaves in the timber gang, taking away the household plantations from the womenfolk and indenturing the children for generations to come.

The slavery, the bondage imagery is every where. The references to Massa and Boss Man are pervasive. He must hear it, read it. He must see it on the anxious, angry faces of the people who trusted him once upon a time.

Belizeans who turned away in boredom when the We The People Reform Movement, the Commission on Political Reform made their recommendations are now calling vehemently for an elected senate, a limit on campaign financing and terms of office.

He may think he is not a monster, but he sure seems to have created one. And now even he no longer knows how to control it.

The straw that broke the camel's back



Solitary demonstrator waves the flag while the crowd picnicked during midday lull

☛ (Continued From Page 1)
Commerce & Industry and the other private sector organizations that were bold enough to bring the camel to its

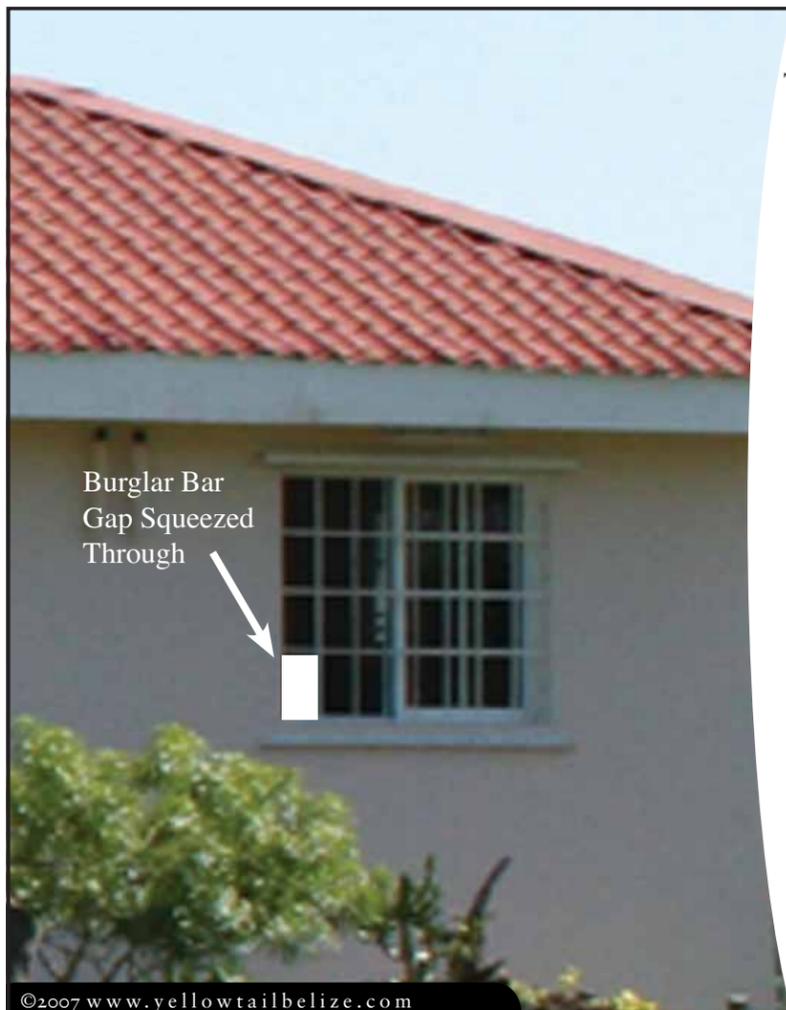
knees. Maybe they'll take on the much despised English Pirate next and become true champions of the poor people of Belize.

US Permanent Rep to OAS speaks on the rule of law

☛ (Continued From Page 1)
under a deportation order. The extradition request is still being reviewed. He is still under investigation for other crimes. There have been teams that have gone to other countries to investigate if there were any crimes that took place outside of the United States that may have violated U.S. laws while they were being performed. We are still reviewing the U.S. laws that may have been violated. We are communicating with other countries about the possibility of taking Mr. Posada.

Member delegates, the United States, contrary to the impression that you may have heard that we are not doing anything with regard to this case, is actively working this case, and I sum up by saying that we still believe that it is a bilateral issue between us and Venezuela, and I do not believe that this issue belongs in this forum, and I thank you for your attention. I am apologetic that we have had to take your time, when we could be dealing with other matters of much more urgency before the General Assembly comes before us. Taken from

www.oas.org.
with Anthony Hunt



THE hunt IS ON FOR THIEVES

THIEVES HALT THE FOOD COLUMN, FOR NOW...

380 Lake Gardens, Ladyville

Well, 4 brazen kid thieves (Yes, we know who you are!) paddled in a stolen canoe, cleverly avoided some dogs, then managed to, by sheer luck, pick the only time this year the alarm was off, and squeeze (Yes, squeeze!) through a 12 inch by 14 inch space in my burglar bars, to enter this writer's home and steal several items, including my camera used to do this column. All of this happened while we were at a children's party just down the street in BROAD DAYLIGHT on a Sunday afternoon. Obviously we were staked out, but the bigger question is ...what is becoming of a country in which adults actively encourage a child to do home invasions? It is truly sad. Our political culture of self entitlement and dependency has ultimately bred lazy adults who send their kids to steal. And to know that we are being stalked, in our own homes, in a well laid out plan...well, that is truly not the Belize that I love. But, I dare them to try it again....they have a very, very big surprise waiting on them, and we will not be caught napping! In the meantime, we foiled their Monday attempt at a house down the street, where they escaped into the "Japan" bushes. We recovered the canoe. Psst....notice the absence of the word "police" in this story....Belize is now the wild wild west and the hunt is on. Hey theives, consider yourself warned...if you can read....

Guest Gallery

On Wednesday May 30th Caracol students from Arenal Belize and Guatemala are presenting their photographic exhibition 'Living on the Border Line' at the George Price Centre for Peace and Development in Belmopan. The Exhibition will run until Monday 11th June.

This exhibition was launched in Arenal Village on 5th and 6th May of this year and will be touring to Belmopan City, Guatemala City and other locations in Belize, England and

Scotland.

Caracol-yed and the Language Exchange Project Belize-Guatemala sponsor this exhibition.

Tu Caracolito, a bilingual youth magazine including texts and pictures produced by the same students, will be officially presented to the public.

If you have photos you would like to share in Independent Reformer Weekly's Guest Gallery email them to karlavernon_belize@yahoo.com in jpeg format.



"My little brother's name is Edson Ardani Meda. He was pretending to kill birds when I took the picture at my brother in law's lot. My brother in law wanted to kill all the red headed wood peckers because they were eating all the oranges. He offered to pay the children one quetzal for each bird they killed." (photo by Efrain Meda Cunil, age 15)



Who is this fisherman? (Hint: you can find his alter ego on page 5)



"I took this picture of my grandfather because he asked me to take it. He was taking a rest on the cement edge of the house. I loved my grandfather very much because he was very good and he loves me taking his picture. Even when it is going to be one year since his death, I cannot forget my beloved Grandfather." (photo by Ofelia Pat, age 14)



"To take this picture I went on top of a stone and I almost fell over. It was raining during those days and the river was dirty, and there was mud everywhere. As there is no running water in every house, this child was taking water out of the river. He is wearing my Dad's boots because he didn't want to get his feet dirty." (photo by Greisy Marroquin Guerra, age 14)

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Letters to the Editor

(Continued From Page 2)

early age. Money does need to be spent on educating parents, children and teachers on how they can be their own care-givers.

The oil revenues are said to be the source for payment so that all can have free medical care. So far we haven't seen what this may amount to and when it will be available. It sounds great but as the saying goes "There is many a slip between the cup and the lip"

Pat Asling,
Benque Viejo

Cowboys and Indians

Dear Editor,

I just watched the news (Thursday May 24). It appears that PM Musa has outmaneuvered opposition leader Dean Barrow once again. No matter how you slice it, Musa is a better manipulator than Barrow.

It's crystal clear that Musa can wiggle out of any trap Barrow may devise. Perhaps Musa is the best candidate to lead this country, a country full of people who have been regretfully overcome and crippled by a deep-seated malaise.

Belize could follow the old communist method of issuing vodka (in this case rum) to the citizens in an effort to quell their ever-simmering discontent. But, I don't think so. Currently, anger is the drug of choice used as an intoxicant by manipulators.

Or perhaps they could vote into office people who actually care about this

country and their collective welfare. Yes. This makes sense.

It will be interesting to see what transpires over the next few years. This Musa-Barrow "cowboys and Indians" routine is getting a bit old. Where is the creativity? Where are the big ideas that when implemented will deliver the citizens into a prosperous economy and better lifestyle?

It's really none of my business, but Belizeans are wonderful people who deserve better treatment by their government. They deserve a chance to live better lives. Being nice by nature has hurt Belizeans in the long run. Bullies have run rough shod over them. What a shame.

Yes, bad business decisions have mostly robbed Belizeans of any hope for security. So far, it seems that none of the decision makers, present or past, have done enough to propel the Belizean economy forward. Selfishness has robbed the treasury.

But you see that same selfishness every day when some maniac zooms past your car on the roads...passing on blind curves with that "Me First" attitude that is the underlying disease eating away at Belize.

Meanwhile, murdering thugs continue to terrorize Belizeans trying to earn an honest dollar. They don't just rob. They kill. For nothing. The only way to turn this entire zoo around is to start taking a hard line with street thugs, then work up to the thugs in government. Not that

there's much difference between the two.

What we need now is a lot of tar and

feathers. Rehabilitation starts at home.

Signed,
An adopted Belizean

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PARENTS

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