

The Independent

Reform for the People

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Rape of a Village

By Special Correspondent

The Village Council Act was adopted by the Legislature on the 28th day of January 2000. The purpose of the act was to empower the Villages and give them the autonomy to enable them to conduct their own affairs.

The Prime Minister, the Hon. Said Musa, presented the act to the villagers. He held up a copy of the act and spoke of the struggle that he had with the other Ministers in having Village Council Act passed to become law.

But the Villagers were to learn that the struggle was just beginning.

There were Ministers that coveted the power that belonged to them. They were to learn that instead of gaining power, the Villages would be stripped of authority that had always been recognized as theirs.

The act provided the Villages with the right to draft and have approved Legislation that was necessary to govern them. Yet none of the Villages have been able to take advantage of the act. There were Ministers who, like piranhas, devoured the Villagers' rights.

Pursuant to the act, the Village of Placencia proceeded to have their By-Laws and the Legislation that was necessary to carry out the functions of the Village prepared. So that everything would be proper in form they employed an eminent attorney to assist them.

The completed legislation was forwarded to the Human Development Office for its approval. The office gave its approval and forward the proposed legislation to the Solicitor General's Office, for him to place the Legislation before the legislators for its final approval.

The proposed legislation rested on the Solicitor General's desk for two (2) years, without further action. In the meantime, there were many aspects of the affairs of the Villages that were causing problems. Among the problem were, lack of building restrictions. People were building up to property lines without proper set backs for light and air. There was the inability to raise funds necessary to conduct Village affairs, licenses were granted without the Villages approval.

The Village's Legislation that had been approved by the Human Development



(Photo courtesy Destination Belize)

Office remained on the Solicitor General's desk. It stayed there in spite of the PUP's promise in their 1998 Manifesto that, provided: "a Village Council Act will be passed taking into full account the proposals of the Villagers. Ministerial power over all these bodies will be phased out".

Nothing has been phased out.

The UDP had responded in their 1998 Manifesto that "The new UDP Government Rape of a Village will introduce Legislation for a Village Council Act to provide autonomy to Villages".

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Free Stay Belize update

By: Judy Duplooy
Director, Belize Hotel Association

Why would 34 hotels throughout the country of Belize offer free rooms to guests for 4 nights in December? Maybe because, after a bad "off-season", they wanted to prove that Belize is just as great during this time as it is when it is busy? In fact, some people like it better when it is not crowded and they have Maya sites, caves, rivers, trails and coastal activities virtually to themselves.

From December 3-7, nearly 100 people enjoyed free rooms and one of them, Yvonne Rose, a US citizen, was the winner of a US\$1,000.00 Bank Account donated by Atlantic Bank. We didn't get a photo of Yvonne, because she had gone from Cayo's Crystal Paradise Resort to Caye Caulker when the drawing was held on December 6, but Efren Perez from the BTIA office tracked her down and her

prize will be awarded to her in New York next week. He also did an outstanding job of keeping the website up to date and the information flow going.

The general consensus of the people who were lucky enough to take advantage of the free rooms is that Belize is a great place to visit and they will tell their friends about it. Some of them said that they wouldn't have thought of coming here but were very happy they did. And we all know what our best advertising is - work of mouth.

Belize's Advertising Agency, RFCP did a great job of getting the word out on this program and it received publicity from several major US newspapers, radio stations and websites.

Dani Pop from the BTIA office did a great job of creating an instant website where people could log on and make their own reservations.

A lot of people were skeptical about

our really offering free rooms and thought it was some sort of scam. Ms. Rose and a lot of other people can assure you that it wasn't.

Our overnight tourism business is shaky at the moment and our occupancy is the lowest in the Caribbean. A few of the reasons could be:

The cruise industry is a deterrent to eco-tourists who respect the environment and culture, spend time learning about places they visit and appreciate where they are. These folks, along with a lot of people in the overnight tourism industry, believe in truth in advertising and don't think that we can court massive cruise ships and present ourselves as an eco destination at the same time.

Crime scares people away. People who read before they come wonder why the private sector had to provide reward money and equipment for recently

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Hard to swallow

Madam Editor,

I had a little difficulty swallowing Meb Cutlack's *Shrimp Scampi*. He opened his piece by cursing a proposed GOB decision to ease the tax pressure on the shrimp industry as "the most extraordinary crony deal yet devised." Yet, in the third paragraph of his article he states that this tax relief is coming "at a time when the international shrimp market has been hit by an unprecedented glut of Asian shrimp which has lowered the price of shrimp internationally to less than the price of chicken in many countries!"

In the fourth paragraph Mr. Cutlack concluded that there is no way Belize "can possibly compete with the rising Asian shrimp industry."

Indeed, Madam Editor, can we compete with Asia with anything? If we follow Cutlack's logic we should have closed down the citrus industry when Florida and Brazil had us squeezed these last two decades. And we should have closed down the sugar industry a long time ago too. Please, what is to become of us?

I got the sense from the article that the author has a strong bias for tourism. I also got the sense that he has a problem with mega projects (which I share), and that the scale of tax relief for shrimps is the real bug. On the latter matter he would have had to do more research, punch in numbers to justify condemnation of the government's PROTECTION.

The reality is that our government must do what it has to do to protect

Belizean agro-industries and manufacturing. It did not do enough for citrus during the hard times. It is not doing enough for sugar in these hard times. Maybe it is not doing enough for banana, yes, and tourism at this time. I will not condemn it if it does enough for shrimp to help us weather this storm.

In respect to mega projects, Jim Hyde, one of the pioneers of the shrimp industry, was a firm believer that Belizeans should participate in the shrimp and fish farm industries, not only as workers, BUT AS OWNERS OF SMALL FARMS. He felt that such farms are not only financially viable, but that they are important for our social structure. I am certain the farm models he designed and advocated are on files.

Finally, there is a certain irony to the present shrimp situation. Mr. Cutlack noted in paragraph four of his article that the Asian glut "has lowered the price of shrimp internationally to less than the price of chicken in many countries!" I was told that Keith Jackson, who brought his money from Texas (?) to start the shrimp industry in Belize, dreamed that shrimp would one day compete with chicken for Sunday dinner!

Respect,
Colin Hyde

Missed a good speech

Madam Editor,

Thanks for the tone and quality of information in your newspaper. I especially like your news stories on what hoteliers are doing to fight

a crooked government, and, government's complete tax giveaways to the shrimp industry. Those stories may well have played in other papers. I don't think so. But no one is reporting that essential information.

You did not carry Dean Barrow's speech to the Better Business Bureau, probably because you didn't receive it.

However the Guardian reprinted a copy and I was impress with the Opposition Leader's first call for reform: The right of the people to recall a minister or Government if they determined they have been lied to or they need to stop an ongoing situation like these Pirates Using Politics (PUP) to loot the Belizean ship of state.

I have been screaming for that reform from down in P.G. (which is out of the loop) because that truly ensures that power stays in the hands of the people.

The right of the people to recall a minister or Government for cause—either for promising what can't be delivered just to win an election, or, once in office, doing what the politicians wants because they rule by right for five years—is an essential way we the people can control the people we elect to government. For that reason I urge you to reprint Mr. Barrow's speech.

....you will realize that the PUP has built a masterful misinformation system that the UDP, for some reason, has not really responded to. So you see the INdependent is truly needed!

C. Eddie Edmondson
Punta Gorda

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Belize Seeks National Assembly Approval for Exchange Offer

The Government of Belize announced that it will seek the approval of the Belizean National Assembly for the financial terms of an offer to exchange most categories of Belize's outstanding external commercial indebtedness for new U.S. Dollar Bonds (the "New Bonds"). If approved by the National Assembly, the exchange offer will be formally launched later this month.

The decision to seek the National

Assembly's approval for these terms was preceded by four months of intensive consultations by Belize and its financial advisers with the affected creditors. The financial terms for which approval is being sought are based on economic data and forecasts that have been published by the International Monetary Fund as part of Belize's most recent Article IV Consultation, and take account of the views expressed by

creditors during the period of consultations.

The creditor consultations were very helpful to us in defining the terms for which parliamentary approval is now being sought, said Mark Espat, Minister of National Development of Belize. A consensus seemed to form around the maturity date of the New Bond (twenty-two years), as well as on the desirability of preserving principal at the aggregate level. The most debated issue was

the proper coupon structure of the New Bonds. Some creditors proposed a total debt service holiday in the early years, followed by an immediate jump back to very high fixed coupons. Others advised a more gradual, step-up coupon structure, consistent with Belize's projected capacity to pay.

We concluded that Belize can afford to make some coupon payments, even in the (Please Turn To Page 15) 



Hon. Dean Barrow, Leader of the Opposition

"There was an interest payment, there was a coupon due today and the government has not paid it and let the Prime Minister try to deny that. What is happening today is default and its not just me saying so, Standard and Poor's also said that it revised to D its long term currency ratings. D is default and if anybody doesn't accept that D is default then the only thing D can possibly stand for then is duncy.

So we are jacking up our creditors. We are telling them we have stopped paying. We have until I think the end of March they are saying in the motion to try and persuade you to accept the new arrangements so that we can then resume paying so that our default doesn't continue. And if you don't

do that, then you will not be paid at all. The nation needs to understand that we are leveraging the creditors in what in the end may prove to be at least partially a partially effective way but at the utter expense of our credibility and our good name by telling them we are stop paying now and you can hope that we will start to pay you by the end of March so you better accept our terms or the default will continue and you'll get nothing.

Don't give the Belizean nation the impression that you have been able to work any wonders or that the path you are walking is not in fact attended by opprobrium on the part of the international community. .. We will be known as an economically failed state. We will be known as a hard pay, can't pay vagabond nation. That is what this means."

-- excerpt of the proceedings at the National Assembly, Friday December 8, 2006 ---



PM Said Musa

"All along they have been predicting that this debt rearrangement, debt restructuring would fail, that we would default, that the whole world will collapse around us, and indeed they came today, despite the evidence staring at them in the face to the contrary, they came here today, in the words of the Leader of the Opposition, to speak about Belize being a failed state, a vagabond nation, that we are jacking up creditors. These are very serious words that have a serious indictment on the whole country coming from somebody who pretends and aspires to become the leader of our nation. It is a shame, it is disgusting, and in fact it proves one point: that he may be, I am not trying to go

personal here, he may be a good lawyer but when he talks about politics, this is where we should really be using the D word indeed, because he is proving himself to be the political dunce in all this."

-- excerpt of the proceedings at the National Assembly, Friday December 8, 2006 ---

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Too little, too late

Karla Heusner Vernon

Finally, there is something worth reading in the Belize Times. Whether or not Godfrey Smith's column "Flashpoint" is actually a reflection of PUP insider thinking or just a good gimmick to pull in readers is not yet clear, but the first two installments have certainly been thought provoking.

Frankly, many of us could care less if there is a wall at the tourism village or not; most Belizeans are more interested in trying to keep thieves out of their own homes and shops, not dividing up the money pie at the Fort. But I have to admit I did enjoy Smith's reference to Pink Floyd's song "The Wall," even though it dates a great many of us since the younger folks aren't tuned in to the type of music we enjoyed as teens.

It was a great metaphor for what the inner sanctum of this country's political parties tend to do: erect barriers, brick by brick, to insulate themselves from the real world. I know, I know, he didn't mean it that way, that's just how I read it. The beauty of writing is that it's often subject to interpretation.

I suppose the very last brick of that wall was placed this week when Smith wrote that he believes Ralph Fonseca should not run again for the sake of the party. Hmmm, now

that is novel thought. We must have been mistaken when we thought that was what Mark Espat was saying when he called him "Chief Crony" in public. And excuse me if I am wrong, but wasn't that what the cabinet revolt was all about all those months ago? Godfrey Smith would have remembered that and referred to it, wouldn't he? After all, wasn't he a part of

"...is running Ralph out on a rail going to be enough to put the PUP back on track with the voters..."

that little party? At least, in the beginning. To give him the benefit of the doubt, let's suppose his is a strategy of reform, reform from the inside. Why, he is so effective he can now call for Ralph's head right from the pages of the party's own newspaper. That's really something. Talk about freedom of the press!

Let's track down the rest of the G-7 now, shall we? Eamon Courtenay is now head of Foreign Affairs and trying to repair the damage to Belize's image abroad done by the Fonseca/Musa administration, Jose Coye is trying to piece back together the

health care system run broke by the Fonseca/Musa administration, Mark Espat is out there trying to get the creditors off the country's back after the Fonseca/Musa administration maxed out the credit cards and got us billions in debt, Johnny Briceno is trying to clean up the mess the Fonseca/Musa administration got the real estate market into and sort out the duplications of land grants and titles and leases listed to

multiple owners. Cordel Hyde? Well, not sure what he's up to these days, but we can't wait to hear all about it. Unfortunately, I can't quite remember the name of the other member of the 7—oh yes, Servulo Baeza! Hmm, is he still in government?

As interesting as all the speculation—and gossip—is about whether or not Ralph Fonseca will run again, is running Ralph out on a rail going to be enough to put the PUP back on track with the voters, dig Belize out of debt, smooth over the scandals, or raise the Prime Minister's ratings?

It's not new for Fonseca not to run for office

but end up with choice ministries anyway. Why should this time be any different? Why should Belizeans have any reason to believe he will not simply sit out the election and then sit back in Cabinet once more?

So far, Belizeans aren't buying it, anymore than they believe pumping money into Universal Health Services is going to guarantee universal health coverage for all, or that THIS time the NHI really IS going to "Roll out" on the southside or northside or Toledo side or any side at all. Next to the Orange Walk By-pass, NHI roll outs are probably among the longest standing campaign promises ever!

We did, finally, get the by-pass, after budgeting for it in about 10 or 12 budget readings, so maybe... stranger things have happened.

But we're sorry, Mr. Smith, asking Ralph Fonseca not to run is way, way over due to do the PUP any good. As for the nice little wall you've built around yourselves, well, any real engineer could tell you it's got so many cracks in it any little tremor, even offshore, is likely to bring it down around your ears.

For many Belizeans, the only actions that could save the PUP is if both party leaders were to announce they would not contest the next General Election, have the party chose a new leader and give the country the assurances neither Fonseca, nor Musa, would be given seats in Cabinets, or any portfolios at all.

Short of such drastic change, anything else is too little, too late.



Don't destroy the bedrock

By Meb Cutlack

The bedrock, upon which the entire tourism in Belize is built and based, is the environment: the Barrier reef, the country's rivers, beaches, streams, wild life and the hundreds of varieties of flora - ranging from the tiny black orchid to the magnificent mahogany and giant Guanacaste trees and, as important as any of the above, Belize's extraordinary Mayan past.

All of the above mentioned treasures of Belize are now under some sort of siege from recent government policies.

The bedrock upon which so much of our tourism is based is being deliberately chipped away by projects such as Chalillo, the Ara Macao project and, most dramatically, by the entire cruise ship industry.

Ruined rivers (some of which now carry lead and other poisons) don't bring visitors. Vanished forests, despoiled Mayan cave networks and eroded beaches don't bring visitors. Instead, cruise ship tourists, who gape but don't buy - chase away overnight and long stay visitors.

The same long stay visitors, are the true breadwinners for Belize and Belizeans. Their money does not just slip into a bottomless jar labled 'General Revenue' for our prolific government to waste as it sees fit. 'Long stay' money spreads like a bountiful tide across the

country touching small lodges and restaurants, guide services, taxi drivers -in city and districts - and yes, hair braiders too.

Long stay visitors come in dignity and often with a deep interest in Belize and Belizeans. Cruise ship tourists, more

"One day our grandchildren and their children will ask: "What happened to Belize? Didn't it used to be a beautiful unspoilt country with great forests, mighty rivers, wildlife, precious coral islands and beaches?"

likely than not, see Belize as just another grubby port city where they are warned not to eat or to drink the water.

One of the cruise ship companies even displays a poster depicting a person with bloody facial wounds and carrying a warning about Belize.

One day our grandchildren and their children will ask: "What happened to Belize? Didn't it used to be a beautiful unspoilt country with great forests, mighty rivers, wildlife, precious coral islands and beaches?"

They will only see giant projects managed from abroad, huge tourism enterprises locking thousands of "new tourists" into stategic compounds safe from local contamination except for a very few local staff struggling to survive against imported labour sanctioned by some crooked minister or another.

These enterprises are like beached

a trick and warned against accepting the gift, but no one listened, and the horse and gifts were duly hauled into their fortress. The Trojans merrily drank the wine in celebration - as they considered the horse, the wine and the whole affair, a surrender by the Greeks.

It wasn't. When night fell, and all were "in a drunken stupor", the Greek soldiers hidden in the horse came out and sacked the city of Troy.

Hence the expression, "Never trust a Greek Bearing gifts"! Well, translated into modern terms, relating to Belize, that means don't trust the lavish promises made by huge foreign enterprises. Check out what has happened with BEL, with BTL and, what is still happening, with our disputed water company.

Conversely, labeling environmentalists and "greens" as some type of Enemies of the State is a deliberate ploy by the friends of big business to lull Belizeans into accepting their Trojan horses - labelled "Ara Macao", "BEL", "BTL" and "cruise ship tourism" - through the gates of unspoilt Belize.

A single terrorist attack on a cruise ship could sink the whole cruise ship industry - and a huge chunk Of Belizeans resources and debt, which are sunk into it, along with the industry.

Think about it!

cruise ships, which already exist in Mexico. Without exception they are owned from abroad or "offshore" and that's where the profits flow— offshore.

A Belize Hotel Association board member recently likened cruise ships tourism to a Trojan horse - a trick the ancient Greeks employed by hauling a huge wooden horse into the forecourt of the castle of the Trojans. It was offered as a gift with barrels of wine and other goodies.

The wise men among them suspected

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We Belizeans Against the Dam

CHALLILO DAM is still a LIE

Our electricity bills have skyrocketed

The fish are not safe to eat

The Macal River looks and smells bad

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

We still don't know what to do if there is

a dam break emergency.

Fortis/BECOL failed to keep their

promises on the Chalillo Dam.

On Vaca Dam, estimated cost of US\$50 million!!

they are not making promises (only profits)

In unity there is strength

By Chet Schmidt

What helps to rally and unite people in need? One thing is a plan to satisfy their needs. Who are the people in need? In the Toledo District everyone except the very rich are in need. The poor obviously need gainful employment. The middle class need security and income to maintain their wealth. When the poor are desperate they resort to stealing from those who have.

The middle class often have borrowed to develop their land and businesses. If they can not make the money they need to pay their loans they can lose what they have. Both the poor and wealthy can succumb to the temptation to drugs and alcohol. So the plan must be for everyone, the rich and the poor. A plan that everyone can identify with. A plan that they can see will help them. Is that all that's needed to rally the majority of the people? Yes, but to get the support of all the people no!

The fact is there is a small number of very rich and powerful individuals and groups who are not interested in truly changing the situation. They are battling to safeguard their power and profits by opposing change. Right now in Toledo and the rest of Belize there seems to be a stand-off between the concerns of 90% of the population and the prerogatives of the corporations, the heads of our government, the wealthy elites who benefit from things as they are. They do not want positive change for the people. Ironically, the "Peace" Corps and other volunteers are supporting them.

Some of our top political rulers understand implicitly that their system is established to suit the needs of the few, not the many, and that the people cannot therefore ever be permitted to question and alter their rule. They will propose and fund projects doomed to failure, but not those that will succeed.

Our government and those non government organizations who work so well with them, have worked incessantly to see that important issues like the Toledo People's Eco Park are never publicly debated, or allowed a chance. The poverty forums, the many meetings and seminars, and the most recent, Toledo.

Strategy and Action Plan 2006-2009 clearly shows This—the lawyers call it "proof by omission." The Ministry of Economic Development has been forced to admit that the results of their previous projects have been "disappointing" and the level of disappointment has reached a point where residents are wary of development projects and external aid, that come in the same

packages.

The obvious question is then, if our government truly believes this, why did they not support the Memorandum of Understanding in support of The Toledo People's Eco Park Plan signed by leaders from across the board in Toledo? It was designed by and for the people of Toledo, using the democratic participatory planning process.

The present Minister of Economic Development has stated in the forward to the "new" strategy plan, that, "there is no better recipe for success than a government that coordinates and plans, then uses the plans to guide investments". The truth is the "best recipe" for a truly free and participatory democratic government, is when the government listens to the plans that the people design and develop, and then helps to coordinate and find investment for them! When our present system begins to walk their talk, when they abandon dishonest PR and buying elections, permits a representative media and is comfortable establishing a genuinely equalitarian participatory democracy because it no longer fears the power of the many, then Belize will shine and be truly free.

Neo liberalism is the defining political economic paradigm in Belize today.

It refers to the policies and processes where by a relative handful of private interests are permitted to control as much as possible of social life in order to maximize their personal profit.

President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela held up a book at the United Nations that tells more about this.

Our government leaders' speeches sound as if they are doing poor people, the environment, and everybody else a tremendous service as they enact policies on behalf of the wealthy few. The economic consequences of these policies have been the same. A massive increase in social and economic inequality, a huge public debt, a marked increase in severe deprivation for the poorest of our people.

The 2002 poverty assessments indicated that 79% of the people of Toledo are poor and 56% are very poor or indigent. Although well over 61 million dollars in foreign aid has been allocated to the district since 1978. (note: this does not include governments counter part funds.) the people of Toledo are poorer now then ever before.

In the foreword to the Strategy and Action Plan for 2006-2009, the Minister of Economic Development

states, "a conscious attempt was made not to focus on the negative features of the prevailing environment in the Toledo District". Why does government not want to focus on the negative reasons for the previous projects failures and for our growing poverty? Because they don't want radical change in the fallacious theory that guides their policies—that one can reach the poor by expanding a process controlled by the rich.

Belize's official aid diagnoses is the poor are poor because they lack certain things, credit, good roads, better seeds, etcetera. But what the poor really lack is power, power to secure what they need. Our government policies focus on the lack of materials. Their focus should be on the lack of power. Therein lies the fundamental difference. Some of our government leaders have made a big name & money calling for "power to the people". But today you have to address them as "Your Excellency" while the "poorest of the poor" are worse off then ever before.

The Memorandum of Understanding in support of the further development of the Toledo People's Eco Park Plan was signed on September 12th 2003 by representatives of all the democratically elected leaders of Toledo District. The major conservation and development organizations, The Toledo Civil Society and other groups signed. The USA Peace Corps, seeing this consensus, later signed.

Although two acting heads of the Ministry of Economic Development were personally presented with the Toledo People's Eco Park Plan Memorandum of Understanding and project description and plans, they refused to support the peoples request for the further development of the plan. When pressed, one PUP government representative said. "Look if we allow you to try your pilot project in three or four villages and PG Town as you want, and it is successful everyone will want to do it and there will be no stopping them".

The government has been very successful in supporting projects designed in London, Washington,

Belmopan or elsewhere which have failed miserably.

Sometimes the same consultants have been used—locally we call them "consultants for failure". However they will not support a program designed by the people of Toledo.

Today they have another project financed by European Union, The Belize Rural Development Project, to the tune of millions more. It is very similar to the previous failed projects. How can the government Ministers and these funders be so blind? Who doesn't know that it is unreasonable to expect different results when continually trying the same methods?

These Ministers, banks, and the NGOs they fund, have made a lot of money. If they truly wanted different results, they would surely try different approaches. Any good businessperson knows they will quickly go out of business if they continue to waste their capital. The people of Toledo are not as ignorant as our government and the funders want to believe.

The current Minister of Economic Development for the rich, is correct when he writes, "a spirit of consultation fatigue prevails in Toledo District".

The level of disappointment has reached the point where residents of the District are wary of development projects and external aid. Why then doesn't our government give the peoples plan a chance?

Some who don't know about what we Belizean's have traditionally called "victimization", may ask why the leaders and respected civic leaders who signed as witnesses, the head of our Justices of the Peace, and another JP who was awarded The Order of the British Empire, and the many ordinary citizens who appreciated their standing up to the plate and asking that the people's plan be given a fair chance don't protest?

The simple answer, is because of our legitimate fear of those more powerful in this little-changed, post colonial, hierarchal, often quasi feudal political and social structure.

But we can longer afford to be afraid. "More power to the People of Belize".

Comments?
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to share your thoughts
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Total madness

By: Trevor Vernon



Last week this newspaper ran a cartoon (see December 5, 2006 issue) which I believe captures the essence of a fundamental

flaw in the type of government we inherited. Like sheep, we adopted it, never contemplating the camel trading that was to come, or the politicians that would arrive on the scene, with egos and complexes to rival that of Napoleon with Jack Palance's face.

Something is fundamentally flawed with our "Parliamentary Democracy that is based on the Westminster Model". We all learned about that idealistic government model, some us at St Mary's Primary back in the early 1970's. It was the royal ideal for us natives.

But, somewhere along the line, the royal ideal was contaminated. We are left now with a system totally out of step with the optimistic perceptions that have the Belizean people electing and re-electing two political parties that enrich not the country, but themselves.

Where are the Englishmen who taught us right from wrong? All we get now is their snotty rich offspring pillaging what their own fathers tried to create, and leave as their legacy.

Many in Belize, particularly the older generation still revere that legacy. I was out distributing this paper's first issue a couple weeks ago and approached an "ageable" lady. At first, she was reluctant to take a free copy of the IN so I had to convince her. In a flash of insight, I blurted out, "We have a great picture of the Queen with a local man presenting credentials!" The lady melted: "Is she still alive?" Oh, e luk good! Mek a read it, man". How incredible, that we have forgotten that there is still a Queen and that she is still our titular head of state.

Now I am not a constitutional law expert, nor have I consulted one. This is a layman's commentary on the sad state of affairs that exists in this, our country, today. It's a slightly different take, so stay with me.

I believe that the judiciary needs to be much more independent, in both public perception and reality. Way, way, way more so. Hire some constitutional experts to amend the constitution to give teeth to the guarantees of the total independence of this branch of government. But do SOMETHING! I used to think that busting up the old boys' club would do it but these days I am not so sure. I used to think that we should change

the system to admit anyone and everyone with a degree and experience in the courts should be admitted. Some still think this would make a huge difference.

Back in the upper Standards at St. Mary's, I was blessed with great teachers and they hammered this parliamentary democracy thing in my head. When the other branches can run roughshod over the Judiciary like they did during the recent BTLAGM meeting, I get real nervous. I feel altogether hopeless when the constitutional opposition appears to be on board with the bastardization of our "parliamentary democracy based of the Westminster Model".

This malignant condition however is

not without remedy; but, the solution must be multifaceted in its approach. Additionally, I think the constitutional reform must also provide for elections within the judicial branch itself and extended to include an elected police chief, free from Minister's whims & fancies; elected judges free from the Legal Adviser's whims and fancies; elected magistrates, free from the AG's arrogance; elected DPP free from overbearing influences, and an elected Registrar General to give that office total freedom from extra-judicial pressures. Elect them all and provide budgets for each office, each with constitutional guarantees and adequate comforts to provide real protection to the rule of law.

In seeking to right what many Belizeans are seeing as a betrayal by those who are currently elected to office, it seems reasonable that we should focus on separation of powers among the judiciary, the legislative,

and the executive branches of government. Of the three branches, it appears the Judiciary needs to be the most separate from the other two. The judiciary must be given even more constitutional protection to be able to isolate itself from the other two highly politicized sectors in this triad. And the way to make the judiciary more independent rests not only with the charades and pretenses of superficial change. Somehow, some way, we must alter the façade of the constitutional structure of this inherited Westminster modeled parliamentary democracy to ensure that we are truly democratic and as free as possible from egomaniac influences, and unscrupulous individuals, who continue to crucify her with an expired mandate from the people.

Wake up Belize and take the camel by the hump.

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OUR BUSINESS IS FUEL AND TYRES



Crime and Belizean Society

By Richard Hulse

This is not an article which has been written to examine the root cause of crime, but a hint of that will be provided as well. There is no doubt that a demographic area, where a person resides, assists in the shaping of his character, but again one cannot underscore the fact too that while schools serve to educate, there are delinquent student mentors who are at these institutions of learning assisting to miseducate anyone who has an inclination to do so. One of my friends was raising his children in the inner city, but after he moved away to a more appropriate residential area, the change in his children was so dramatic and so thorough, it is hard to believe and would also take a lot of time to explain. There is no secret to the dramatic change, because living in certain demographic areas is like living in a vacuum. In certain of these areas some youths are forced to become gang members, for their own protection, otherwise they may be the targets of abuse for their own neighbourhood. They may not have more friends either, if they are not attending school. In short they will be like an outsider in their own neighbourhood.

It seems too that many of the killings has to do with women, since Belizean men are always controlling and seems to push the boundaries of a relationship beyond it's perimeter, long after it's over. They are women too, one of whom I know personally, who keeps gang boys and have them perpetrate violence against the previous one she left, and she tells women clearly too that if they slip up with her, her boyfriend is going to shoot them.

The main source of the killings in Belize, though, seems to be revenge killings, where one shooting is inextricably linked to the other. The pattern of revenge just keeps going and going, without stopping. If one worked around the courts, one would be able to see that there is one set of people consistently coming before the courts. What is even worse than a person who has been convicted twice or thrice, at least something is known about them. It means that apart from perpetrating violence, this person is knowledgeable of how to go about instilling fear in others. The very thing which weakens the state's capacity to prosecute. And any society which allows too many violent people to run amok, will cause that society to become violent; because people will have to think in a violent frame of mind to deal with them.

We are also living in a society where the bad guys carry guns and the good guys carry none, in short the good citizens are unarmed. When a good guy shoots a bad guy the police have no problems finding witnesses. The case in point, is that the good citizen is afraid of being a witness, because he may suffer the same faith as the person who was killed. In the case of the bad guy, it is the other way around; whenever a bad guy or a gang member is shot, there is automatically a lot of witness, with the exception of those who say we will settle it in the streets: meaning they will simply shoot the person when the opportunity arrives. The essential point that

is being made here is that licences for guns should be given out more liberally i.e. a person who has been consistently employed for ten years along with two testimonials that he is not an uncontrollable drunk, should be able to get a gun without a problem. Again too, any person who wants a gun, should get a replica firearm and see how well they can safe guard it, or whether there may be a possibility that they will get shot with their own gun. And most importantly, if they can figure, how it disappeared or who went with it, all these experiments I carried out to weigh the pro's and con's of keeping a firearm. Keeping a firearm is one thing, but to be prepared to defend yourself at the spur of the moment is another thing: things criminal happens so quickly.

I think too, even the definition of police protection, some people have misled themselves to believe that the police should be like magicians, to appear out of nowhere when some breach of the law is occurring: that happens in the movies, not in real life. No thief is going to make it known he is going to burglarize a house, to have the police waiting for him – that is undermining the purpose. Thieves don't like danger just like everybody else, so they only burglarize places they have knowledge of, or have been provided information about.

I would like to emphasize here too that the people who utilize the services of the police the most, are some of these same people who are criminally inclined, and who spend their time criticizing the police. Some of these people can't even control their own children, in other cases children are encouraged because they come from crime families. When these people appear at court, they don't come

there weeping or crying, they come well prepared. They come with their lawyers, they know how to acquire bail, they know all the right procedures and most of all they don't waste time getting emotional and crying all over the place, their affairs are well organized.

The main problem, which I think is affecting the courts, which is the root cause of cases falling apart, is the problem of locating witnesses. This task falls on policemen; and most people knows that if the police goes looking for someone in a crime riddled area: the only response the policeman will get is "he doesn't live here" or "I don't know who you are looking for". This job of locating witnesses should be considered of paramount importance, because when you are in court, if you have a witness you may have a case, if you don't have no witness you don't have no case, it's as simple as that. Apart from that it's who the jurors believe. Once the system cannot procure these witnesses, the system has been undermined. A suggestion here which I have spoken openly about, is the idea that the courts should hire several process servers, who knows their way around the town, and who is not a policeman. It is self evident that as some people see a policeman, their jawbones become locked, in a society like Belize, once you have lived on the Southside of Belize City, you notice that many people hide from the policeman, the bill collector and the landlord. It should also be noted that the offices of the Director of Public Prosecution's, is and has been for many years, under several previous directors, understaffed. I can recall many many years ago, the entire criminal calendar for the year was about three cases, but we are a

(Please Turn To Page 12) 

Hunt for good food

With Anthony Hunt



D&R Creole & American Cuisine University Blvd HH

The Coopers run this great little restaurant across from Home Protector Insurance in University Heights. While we must say they are better places in town to have rice and beans, their's is above average. However, the ambience, secure location, cleanliness and friendly service more than make up the deficit. And the free pie is well worth the trip. We sampled their fish balls and the cow foot soup. The portions were ample and the delivery time to our table was brisk. We were told that we had missed an excellent (and evidently crowded) Thanksgiving lunch...so I have made a date for next year. By the way, don't forget to try the golden plum juice. Daily Specials, Lunch only \$7 & up

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COMMENTARY

Law and Politics: Integrity in public office and preventing corruption



Lloyd Noel is a former Attorney General of Grenada, prominent attorney at law and political commentator

Tuesday, December 5, 2006, Caribbean News Network

by Lloyd Noel

“Corruption makes the poor poorer, because part of their already meager earnings, and their non-existent disposable income, must pay for basic services which otherwise should be free.”

up being ridiculed for their poor efforts because, as it is said in another circle, you cannot defend the indefensible.

The latest corruption charges, surrounding the Deputy Prime Minister, Gregory Bowen, have taken on such widespread proportions at home and abroad, that they are even impacting negatively on what appears to be quite genuine development investments now coming on stream.

And, in addition thereto, the scandal that seems to have put a serious damper on the people’s prospects of benefiting from gas and oil dollars is now magnified by the economic hell they are catching, because of the very poor state of the economy which was brought about by “Ivan and Emily.” The interest being shown by all and sundry, young and old, and quite ordinary folks, who normally pay little or no heed to such matters, is a clear indication that they view this scandal in a quite different light from those that went before.

And the long standing period of secrecy, and the total absence of transparency have made matters far more alarming.

When questions were being asked by Mr Reynold Benjamin in public articles, and Mr Grynberg himself, in a letter to the Prime Minister, dated February 28, 2003, told him “I have refrained from getting involved in Grenadian politics and have refused to respond to Mr Reynold Benjamin’s many inquiries, in his preparation for the Grenada elections between now and March of 2004. I have also refrained from going to the press.” Even after all that nothing was said to the people, nor to parliament.

The entrance of the Russians into the billions of US dollars scandal and the allegation that \$10 million US dollars had been paid into somebody or bodies bank accounts, certainly not the Treasury of Grenada, seemed to have brought the scam to the boil, which overflowed in the brave move to terminate the agreement between RSM and the Grenada government.

That move triggered the arbitration

action in London, since last year against the government, but still nothing was said to John Public nor the people’s representatives in parliament.

And it was only when Mr Grynberg and his company brought the case in New York on the 1st November this year, and named the Russians and Gregory Bowen as the conspirators to defraud them of the benefits under the 1996 agreement that Mr Bowen saw it fit to make a public statement, and in so doing put all Grenadians to shame.

Since that press conference and the denials that amounted to naught, and the ludicrous statement from the Prime Minister that others in the society are also corrupt, not just the ministers of government - words to that effect - nothing else has been forthcoming from government.

The hue and cry is for some form of inquiry or investigation — whether by a parliamentary selected body, or the police under the direction of the DPP, but not another farce by the governor general and his one-man commissioner — and that Minister Bowen should step down from the position in which he brought shame and scandal to the people and the government he represents. But no response to date.

If any little public (civil) servant is accused of any wrongdoing by his/her Permanent Secretary, the first action, by the Public Service Commission (PSC), is to send that officer home while an inquiry is carried out — so why should there be one brand of treatment for the little fry, and a wholly different brand for the big fish?

After all, they are both public servants and must be subject to the same standards of discipline and accountability. And, as was forcefully underscored, in that conference on the evils of corruption at the OAS last week, “Fighting corruption strengthens democratic institutions and prevents distortions in the economy, improprieties in public administration, and damage to a society’s moral fiber.” In this case of a Cabinet Minister being accused of wrongdoing, the PSC has no

jurisdiction, but the Prime Minister and his cabinet have every such authority to act in the public interest, and in the preservation of the good name and image of his government.

And it cannot be repeated too often, when those at the highest level of the society’s structure — entrusted with the mantle of power and authority, to carry out or to operate the people’s business for the benefit of the people in general — behave in such reckless and disgraceful manner, and everything is just glossed over and excused as no big thing, the message and example being sent to those lower down the ladder of authority, can only be, that it pays better to be dishonest and untrustworthy.

And it goes without my saying so, that what is being cultivated — among those whom we should be training, and preparing to take over the leadership of our people and country tomorrow — is a recipe for cheating and a culture of corruption.

And strangely as it may seem to many, I am not hearing any comments, or seeing any statement by the conference of churches in Grenada, the TUC, nor any of the stakeholders in our civil society — like the chambers of commerce for example. These groups are the so-called social partners that the same government is always referring to, or calling upon when it suits them to put on a show of solidarity.

Is John Public to understand, that none of them see this scandal as deserving of any observation from their memberships?

The same way the top brass of the Catholic Church, were ready and willing to visit the National Stadium, no doubt at the invitation of government, and shower praise on the Chinese workers and the administration for achieving almost the impossible, so too, in my humble opinion, the same spiritual leaders should be prepared and forthcoming, in marshalling the conference of churches to make representation to government to clear the dark and cloudy atmosphere — and to be seen openly to be so doing.

All over the global village nowadays, we’re hearing on the airwaves and seeing on TV the people, the stakeholders of their country’s heritage, the ones who are getting poorer and poorer because of their leaders corrupt (Please Turn To Page 11) 

Fly Tropic Air - Fly Tropic Air - Fly Tropic Air
“The Airline Of Belize”

The 11 birds of Christmas

Each December members of the Belize Audubon Society and other volunteers carry out the Christmas bird count, all over Belize. They count hundreds of species of local and migratory birds, but beginning this week, *Independent Weekly* will give you some information on 11 birds described in a very useful, and charming, field guide, "Jungle Walk" by Katie Stevens.

We begin the series with a trusting little fellow, the Booby Bird, who appropriately enough, has on his Christmas boots.

Webster defines booby as "an awkward, foolish person, and indeed, our beautiful red-footed booby birds (*Sula sula*) are trusting of man to this day, despite the fact that seafarers used to walk right up to them and bash them on the head, a carnage which almost extinguished the species. Today their persistent stupidity allows us the wonderful opportunity to see them up close: the platform provided at Half Moon Caye by the Belize Audubon Society rises right into the middle of the colony, so that you are literally within easy reach of the nearest nesting boobies. Luckily, they are now protected by law!

There are two other species of booby in Belize, the masked booby (*Sula dactylatra*) and the brown booby (*Sula leucogaster*) but neither can compare with the red-foot for lack of color-coordination. It has two adult color phases, one a dull grayish brown similar to any other booby, but in the second phase its feathers are tinted golden white, with black trim along its wings tinged in blue and pink. But all this refinement is more than undone by its rather large, outlandishly red webbed feet—like a guest at a formal masquerade who forgot to remove his galoshes at the door.

In flight, the booby tucks these feet discreetly up under his feathers. In its search for food, it heads out to sea rather than along the coast. Flying fish stirred up by early morning ships are a favorite catch, as are squid glowing phosphorescent in a moonlit night. Like its relative the pelican, the booby has air sacs beneath its skin to cushion it when it dive bombs into the water, often at a good 100 degree angle, wings folded behind its back. So deep does it plunge that propelled by both feet and wings, it approaches its prey from below, often gulping it down whole while still beneath the surface. Again like the pelican, it has a throat pouch which enables it to swallow larger fare than it looks at all likely.

Egg-laying takes place as early as November and as late as April, January being the most popular



month. Usually two eggs are laid, but only one will hatch its shiny black-skinned inhabitant with the black face and the big black bill. Soon the baby booby will sport tufts of white down, more and more until it is thick with fluff, a ridiculous sight. A greedy only-chick, it tries to climb head first into now one, and then the other, of its parents' craws to get at whatever partially digested repast might lie there. And it grows disastrously fat. Finally its parents refuse to feed the little glutton any longer. It hangs forlornly around the nest for a few days, then resignedly plops into the water, but still it may swim around for another ten days before it has used up enough of its fat reserve to be light enough to fly, and so to fish for itself.

It is thought that the Half Moon Caye booby bird colony has survived for over a hundred years, despite heavy egg and chick predation by frigatebirds (men o' war) and rats, and until very recently, men. The only other known red-footed booby colony is off the coast of Trinidad.

Law and Politics: Integrity in public office and preventing corruption

(Continued From Page 10) practices, they are rising up and protesting in one form or another, against the malpractices of those in authority over them. We too, in little Grenada, did likewise in the brave old days when people had dey belly — including priests, and businessmen, and youths.

And protesting against corruption and graft by our leaders who are responsible for the public purse has nothing to do with which party you supporting, but everything to do with the love of your country, and the caring concern for the legacy to our children and those yet unborn.

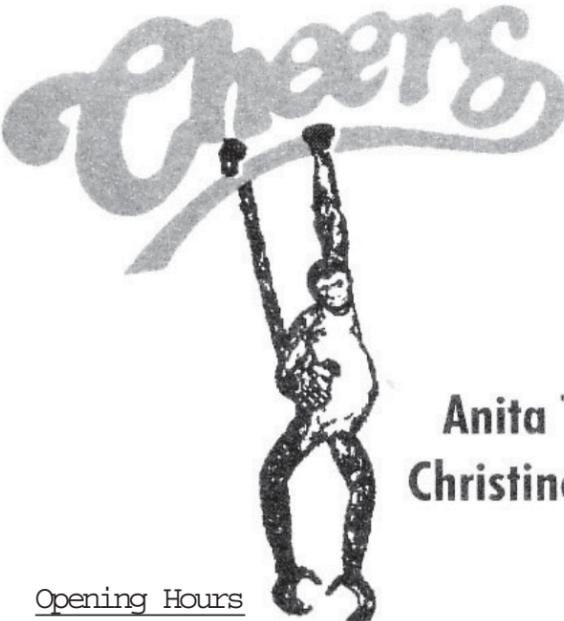
So whether it is NNP, NDC, GULP or PLM, or any other "PP", our concerns and protestations must be the same.

Why, therefore, is this deathly silence from those groups which are expected to lead their members and their flocks? The few voices crying in the wilderness are simply too few to make the required difference.

And just by passing a law in parliament about "Integrity in public office with penalties for corruption" will not make those who get into the parliament buildings, twenty-first century saints by any means.

We, the people, have to constantly monitor their performances, and when needed, tell them what they are doing, or have done in our name is wrong, and they must account and pay the price by stepping down.

So long as we, the people, neglect to demand accountability and transparency and responsibility for wrongdoing, we will never achieve the goal of integrity in public office and the eradication of corruption from our public trustees.



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TOPICAL TIDBITS

Airport discrimination



A young mother married to a Belizean, but carrying a US passport and travelling with her three young children, was not only pulled from the exit line at the International airport but then told that she could only pay her exit tax in US dollars. Her offer to pay with Belize dollars was refused. Her husband, who was there was furious: "How come they don't charge cruise ship passengers exit tax at all? There is something crazy happening in Belize. I believe the government has gone mad!"



Restaurant Tax

There is a strange unreality about restaurant sales tax collection in Belize. Many local Belizean owned restaurants are 'hit' each year with a team of accountant types who descend with their briefcases and suspiciously go through every little sales tax receipt for the past year. Their mere presence suggests total lack of trust and yet there are hundreds of restaurants in the country—big and small Chinese included - which are never bothered and for the most part don't even appear to keep their sales receipts.

I was told: "Oh , Belmopan looks after them!" Is this true are there two sets of rules? "It's

because", the same person told me, "they don't speak English!"

PUP in Belmopan

The defeat of Tony Chanona in Belmopan PUP is, in a way, a sad testimony of the fact that talent, intelligence, and a history of extremely successful leadership of Belmopan City, doesn't necessarily win friends and influence people. My own advise to Mr. Chanona is to stand as an Independent candidate in the coming election. It's time that some of the stalwart and less contaminated PUP hierarchy realized that its better to survive and serve as independents than godown with the sinking PUP ship. They could form part of a new

Belizean democracy ruled from the centre and by a middle group if independents falling between the, almost sure to be victorious, UDP and the, sure to be defeated, PUP.

And Internet cafes



Much the same can be said for internet cafes. Some are taxed and some are not. It appears to be that if you sell coffee or food you are liable to also be taxed for internet usage but not for pure interneting. It's time our government really looked at the manner in which they are destroying all small businesses in Belize for the sake of their 'big' friends and cronies with Belmopan connections.

Negotiations Continue At Oas Towards Declaration On Rights Of Indigenous Peoples

The Organization of American States (OAS) today opened the eighth meeting of negotiations on the draft American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, seeking to make substantive progress on issues related to self-determination, individual rights, fundamental freedoms and collective rights for the native peoples of the hemisphere.

The Chairman of the Permanent Council Working Group on this topic, Ambassador Juan León, who is Guatemala's Alternate Representative to the OAS and a member of the Pueblo Maya K'iche indigenous community, said at the opening of the meeting that the approach to the concept of self-determination will be a key focus of this five-day round of negotiations. He called on representatives of the member states and of indigenous peoples alike to bring creativity in seeking outcomes that "unconditionally reaffirm this right and at the same time ensure unity, confidence and balance among all the players in each member state and the OAS as a whole."

Ambassador León said, "We should spare no effort to imagine a future in which indigenous peoples can be totally free to determine and decide on their own affairs, in terms of what is best suited to their economic, political, social, cultural, educational and legal development, among other rights."

He recalled that the indigenous representatives have "on every occasion" reaffirmed their view that

self-determination does not imply the end nor the destruction of the territorial integrity of current states, an assurance that "instills confidence that a satisfactory conclusion can be reached on this matter."

The Guatemalan diplomat said he was optimistic that the Working Group could make progress cleaning up the text under negotiation, saying he was confident "the necessary consensus will be achieved." He conceded that consensus on certain aspects of the Declaration is not easy, but will depend on "all the delegations being flexible and broad-minded."

Among others participating in the inauguration was Natalia Sara-pura, representative of Argentina's Kolla indigenous community, who said that "self-determination is an inherent right for indigenous peoples." She urged the OAS member countries to join the United Nations Human Rights Council "in recognizing that indigenous peoples, like all other peoples under international law, have a right to free self-determination."

The last round of negotiations was held in Brasilia, Brazil, last March. At both the Fourth Summit of the Americas, held in Argentina in November 2005, and the last OAS General Assembly, in June of this year, the governments of the Americas reiterated the importance of a successful conclusion to this process and the eventual adoption of an American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

(Press Release)

Crime and Belizean Society

➡ (Continued From Page 8)

far cry from that piece of nostalgic history, we are in the present day 2006. The problem of the D.P.P.'s office understaffed is neither a new one, or is it of any directors making. The growth of the D.P.P.'s staff was never commensurate with the increase in crime; simply meaning that while crime grew, the D.P.P.'s office didn't, and the place was structured to deal with a few cases. Again , locating people for some of these long drawn out cases may also be a problem, because I notice that very few people live in a house in these crime ridden areas longer than since months and are paying rent. Some just wait out their landlords, and rent out space in their landlord's house as well. In Belize people seems to move from one place to the other consistently and it is sometimes difficult to locate them. Without a shadow of a doubt, I think the Crime Commission should take into account that the problem of sending policemen to serve summons should be fixed, with the employment of Civilian Process Servers. If they have any doubts, many defaulters on their loans can attest to the effectiveness

of civilian process servers.

The matter of white collar crime is an area, which is a grey area both for the law enforcers and the court, because many white collar crime has to go unchallenged, because these are grey areas which require civil prosecution, which means no assistance from the state or the police department and the hiring of lawyers is out of the question for the working man who can hardly pay their bills. So if they don't left the rich man to take what he wants, they just simply settle the matter by the gun. A matter of paramount importance for the working man is the fact that civil law was developed by rich men for the purpose of extracting or extorting money from other rich. It's a system that has been developed over hundreds of years.

The final problem is the one of a so called witness protection program, which has been in the air for years, it is a problem for the mostly military men at the establishment department in Belmopan, who keep their families and themselves out of these crime ridden demographic areas like the inner cities of Belize and whether they ignore the subject, don't care, or are withholding funds on purpose is a question only they and the politicians can answer.

Comments?
Suggestions? or want
to share your thoughts
Email us at
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Rape of a Village

(Continued From Page 1)

In an attempt to have the matter resolved, Placencia's Village Chairman and Committee members traveled to Belmopan on four (4) separate occasions to keep appointments made with the Solicitor General. On every occasion, there was some excuse why the Solicitor General could not meet with them. On the fourth occasion, they were told that the matter was being turned over to the Minister for their District, Stann Creek West, Minister Rodwell Ferguson.

Turning the matter over to Minister Ferguson did not worry the Villagers.

After all, in order to obtain his nomination for his office at the PUP convention Ferguson had supported the Act. Soon enough, however, the Villagers were to learn of Rodwell Ferguson's treachery.

At the time there was a condominium development named Chabet Mar being constructed on a Placencia beach. The developer had not gone through the time honored procedure of first obtaining approval from the Village Council, prior to applying for Government permits. Instead, the developer obtained them with the approval and assistance of Minister Rodwell Ferguson. The Village Chairman approached Rodwell Ferguson on the matter and he told them flat out he was not going to have their proposed Legislation approved.

They would receive no benefit under the Village Council Act. That was the one thing that Ferguson was truthful about, the fact he was depriving the Village of benefits.

Minister Ferguson, then proceeded to dissolve the Village's Lands Committee and appoint a new one with his own with an associate, Fred Cabral, as Vice Chairman, and Ferguson's supporter, Percival Neal, as Chairman. Rodwell Ferguson's family and associates then began what can only be described as an all our land grab.

His wife, Ana May Ferguson, received 10.011 acres along the Placencia lagoon. There were seven (7) other land grants made either to Rodwell Ferguson, his wife or his son, which totaled 280.61 acres. Fred Cabral received 2 acres along the lagoon. There was a conveyance to HANDS Foundation, Rodwell Ferguson and Fred Cabral of 450 acres plus 14 acres on the Southern Long Caye. There was 6 acres along Placencia lagoon and 50 acres on Flour Caye given to Percival Neal and his wife.

Rodwell Ferguson's next machination denied the poor. He had assumed control of the HANDS Foundation that was conveyed property. The HANDS Foundation was the brainchild of a husband and wife in Placencia that had, before they came to Belize, successfully operated a similar Foundation to provide education for poor children.

The couple made one mistake. Fred Cabral, who worked near the wife, learned of the planned Foundation and became involved. Soon Rodwell Ferguson was also involved and in control. Assertions were then made that HANDS was Rodwell Ferguson's brain child. However, the wife remained as Treasurer. The Foundation did well in soliciting money, particularly from those who needed favors. Among the many donations was \$50,000 from the developer of Chabet Mar and a latter publicized \$125,000 from Ara Macao.

When checks were requested for expenditures that were not appropriate, as Treasurer, she refuse to issue the checks. Those who wanted to dip into the funds were not going to be deterred. As more money came in, accounts were changed to where the treasurers

signature was not required. Money from the account was used to purchase new vehicles for the officers. Fred Cabral received one of the new vehicles. The new account had aspects of a slush fund. Seeing the Foundation deviate from its intended purpose, the Treasurer resigned.

The Foundation did provide funds for tuition, but not in the numbers and manner claimed by Ferguson. The principles of the schools requested that the money be used to help the poor with their education, HANDS Foundation refused. The cost of education involves fees for registration, tuition, books and other charges, books being the greater expense.

The Foundation did provide tuition for students who lived in Rodwell Ferguson's voting District, Stann Creek West. However, the exorbitant cost of books was left for the parents. The Foundation provided nothing for students from Toledo who attended

school at Independence Village, that was in Ferguson's voting District.

The poor from Stann Creek West were without books, and the poor that came from Toledo had neither books or funds for tuition. Prior to HANDS, the schools had a means of assisting the poor. They had donors from whom they could solicit funds. HANDS solicited the same donors and doing so obtained the funds that previously went to the schools. HANDS dried up the school's sources of funds. There was no longer funds to buy books for children of poor families in Stann Creek West or help the students from Toledo in any manner.

Rodwell Ferguson activities were certainly not exemplary for one who holds the position of "Minister of State in Education". Is it greed? Or does he think he is better than them and doesn't give a damn for the poor?

Placencia Peninsula is limited in area (Please Turn To Page 15)

ENERGY FOR LIFE!



BELIZE NATURAL ENERGY LIMITED



"Hi, My name is Frank Rempel, Managing Director of **New Buildings Ltd.** We are a steel construction company. We provide crane services to BNE and look forward to increasing our services to them in the future.



"My name is Blanca Pinto and I am an agent for **RF&G Insurance Company** in Belmopan. We have been providing insurance services to BNE since its inception in Belize and we are very proud to be a part of them.



"I'm Crecensio Teck and I am currently work at **Cayo Steel Works.** Our business is the fabrication of pre-engineered steel buildings. BNE as a client has helped to expand and develop the business .

BNE is rapidly leading the development of Belize's newest industry; the OIL industry. By constantly making capital investments in human resources and operations, BNE has radically impacted the lives of many Belizeans. BNE continues to actively seek out development partners such as contractors and suppliers; ensuring that more and more Belizeans continue to participate in the sharing of this vital resource.





Your weekly
HOROSCOPE

ARIES

(Mar. 21-April 20)

Don't get involved in joint ventures. Help elders with their concerns. Confronting a situation will only result in indignation and misunderstandings.

TAURUS

(Apr. 21- May 21)

Romance could develop through social activities or short trips. Your home environment may be hectic, which could result in emotional upset if you aren't well organized. The only thing you'll accomplish is a bad reputation.

GEMINI

(May 22-June 21)

Take the time to help those less fortunate. Don't overspend on friends or children. Entertainment should include sports events or physical activities.

CANCER

(June 22-July 22)

Help elders in your family. You can make a difference if you offer your help at functions that involve children. Limitation could set in if you've been spending too much.

LEO

(July 23-Aug 23)

Problems with skin, bones, or teeth may mess up your schedule. This will be a very hectic day if you've made promises to too many people. Social get-together will bring you in contact with intelligent new friends.

VIRGO

(Aug. 23 -Sept. 23)

Pleasure trips will be favorable and bring about possible romance. Be cautious while traveling to foreign countries. Keep your feet on the ground, if you can.

LIBRA

(Sept. 24 -Oct. 23)

You can deal with large institutions or government agencies successfully today. Travel will turn out to be far more exciting than you imagined. You may find that someone you live with may be irritable; you're best to leave them alone.

SCORPIO

(Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)

Romance can develop; however, it will most probably be short-lived. You can

make some favorable changes to your looks. You can enjoy your involvement in organizations that make charitable contributions.

SAGITTARIUS

(Nov. 23 -Dec. 21)

Your involvement in interest groups may bring you popularity. Put your energy into your work or moneymaking ventures rather than into your emotional life today. Don't be too quick to voice your opinion. Listen to others carefully.

CAPRICORN

(Dec 22.- Jan. 20)

Some of your new friends may not be that trustworthy. You won't impress anyone by being overly generous. Travel will also entice you.

AQUARIUS

(Jan. 21 -Feb. 19)

You will be able to borrow money in order to invest. Be cautious of making any residential changes today. You need adventure and excitement in your life.

PISCES

(Feb. 20-Mar. 20)

Be sure to sidestep those who are eccentric or unpredictable. You may be frustrated by the way situations are being handled in your personal life. People you live with will not be terribly happy with you regardless of what you do today.

Rape of a Village

➡ (Continued From Page 13)
for expansion. The Villagers have been trying for years to procure land on the Peninsula where their children can live with their families when the children grow up. Their desires are simply a commendable means of keeping family's together.

The Villagers' desires have not been fulfilled. Hundreds of acres have been given out to Ferguson's family, friends and supporters. Land is to be developed and sub-divided much of what will be sold to foreigners while the Villagers families go without.

There are Government Ministers who still use the Villages as feeding

troughs for their own gain, while Villagers suffer. It becomes clear that there are Politicians who have no conscience. They will promise anything to get elected. Is it a form of Political prostitution? If so the prostitutes should not be re-elected.

The voters should learn a valuable lesson. Do not believe Party Manifestos, they are a form of hot air that cools off and is forgotten when the party gets into office.

The voters should take into consideration all of the false or broken promises previously made and not re-elect any of those who made the promises.

Belize Seeks National Assembly

➡ (Continued From Page 3)
early years, added Minister Espat, and that it would be unfair to our creditors to ask for a complete debt service holiday. We will therefore be following a step-up coupon approach. The level of these coupons, however, has been set well above Belize's indicative restructuring scenarios. They are, in effect, at the outer edge of what forecasts show as being affordable for the country.

The Government is seeking National Assembly approval for the issuance of New Bonds that will mature in 2029, with principal payments commencing in 2019. The New Bonds will bear interest in the first three years after issuance at a fixed per annum rate of 4.25%. In years four to five, the rate will increase to 6.00%, and thereafter through the maturity of the New Bonds the interest rate will level off at 8.50% per annum. All coupons will be paid in cash on their respective due dates.

The terms of the exchange offer are

expected to provide that all participating creditors will receive a cash payment at the closing of the transaction equal to unpaid interest on their tendered claims accrued through the closing date. Consequently, interim debt service payments on the existing debts eligible for this exchange offer will cease immediately.

This communication is not an offer of securities for sale in the United States. Securities may not be offered or sold in the United States absent registration or an exemption from registration under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended. Any public offering of securities to be made in the United States will be made by means of a prospectus that may be obtained from the issuer or selling security holder and that will contain detailed information about the Government of Belize. No public offering of securities in the United States is contemplated by the Government of Belize at this time.

(GOB Press Release)

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.

PRE - CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Check store for details.....!



MOTOROLA

Silver L6

- * ultra sleek silver form
- * 4x VGA digital camera
- * bluetooth wireless technology
- * preloaded games & downloadable ringtones
- * video capture & playback
- * poc quick connection



MOTOROLA RZR

BLACK V3

- * integrated VGA camera
- * MPG4 video playback
- * bluetooth wireless technology
- * voice-activated dialling
- * integrated hands-free speakerphone
- * Quad-band GSM (850/900/1800/1900)



MOTOROLA

Black L6

- * ultra sleek silver form
- * 4x VGA digital camera
- * bluetooth wireless technology
- * preloaded games & downloadable ringtones
- * video capture & playback
- * poc quick connection



MOTOROLA

A 1200

- * TFT touchscreen, 256K colors
- * micro SD slot, TransFlash card
- * Intel PXA270 processor
- * Handwriting and speech recognition
- * bluetooth with stereo headset profile
- * 2mp 1600x1200 pixels. video(CIF)



MOTOROLA

Pink L6

- * super slim design
- * stores 100 apple iTunes
- * long battery life up to 6.3 hours
- * bluetooth wireless technology
- * expandable memory card slot
- * video capture & playback
- * giant color screen



SAMSUNG

Black SGH-D820

- * 1.3 megapixel camera
- * MP3 player, ringtones
- * microSD card expansion
- * bluetooth headset stereo
- * Quad-band GSM
- * USB 2.0 connectivity
- * S-video TV output
- * 73MB onboard memory
- * 2.2-inch QVGA high resolution



LG CHOCOLATE

KG800 Black

- * 1.3 megapixel camera with LD flash
- * tri-band GSM & GPRS
- * 128 MB internal memory
- * USB 1.2 Mass Storage
- * MP3 player
- * fashionable design
- * high-quality finish
- * touchpad navigation
- * fast system response



LG CHOCOLATE

Wine KG800

- * 1.3 megapixel camera with LD flash
- * tri-band GSM & GPRS
- * 128 MB internal memory
- * USB 1.2 Mass Storage
- * MP3 player
- * fashionable design
- * high-quality finish
- * touchpad navigation
- * fast system response



SAMSUNG

Silver SGH-X426

- * GSM 1900/850
- * color LCD screen
- * 128 X 160 pixels
- * predictive text input
- * programmable keys
- * clamshell design



MOTOROLA

K1 KRZR

- * 2 megapixel digital camera
- * Quad-band GSM & GPRS
- * 20 MB internal memory
- * microSD(Transflash) card expansion
- * Polyphonic MP3
- * bluetooth technology
- * Built-in handsfree
- * VZ navigator
- * enhance music player



MOTOROLA

V177 Silver

- * 65k-color display
- * MP3 player, ringtones
- * quick access external LCD
- * 32 polyphonic ringtones
- * multimedia messaging
- * voice command & memo
- * WAP 2.0 internet browser
- * internal & external display screens



Tel: 227-3596 or 227-0088

@ Venus Photos & Records

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