

The Independent

Reformer for the People

Vol. 2 No. 18

Friday, May 11, 2007

\$1.00

Checkmate!

Master chess player Prime Minister Said Musa may have run out of moves. New information on the Universal Health Services Guarantee and documents signed with the Belize Bank has caused Belizeans at home and abroad to follow “Guarantee-Gate” with rapt attention, and anger.

Leader of the Opposition, Dean Barrow has not only reiterated his call for the Prime Minister’s resignation, he has now set a deadline for the National Assembly. His ultimatum: call a house meeting during which he can challenge the Guarantee by Friday, May 11, or the United Democratic Party will hold a national protest.

The party is now playing hardball after News 7 disclosed last week that the Prime Minister had **already** signed a settlement deed with the Belize Bank even as he was instructing his own Finance Committee to try and “renegotiate” with that bank. In fact, the loan payments are already overdue.

During a press conference May 3 Barrow said the PM has gone too far this time: “There are two extremely grave offenses that the Prime Minister



Can the PM pull himself out of the UHS mess?

has committed against the constitution and the polity of this country. One is doing the guarantee and now, even worse, the loan agreement in an unlawful manner, a patently illegal manner and the second is in lying to everybody in an effort to conceal those illegal actions that had in fact engaged in... There can be no question of any ignorance on the part of the Prime Minister. Deliberately, with malice a forethought, this man secretly converts the already illegal guarantee into a loan that expressly violates

the terms and provisions of the Finance and Reform Act.”

In a bizarre twist to the whole affair, PUP Secretary General Henry Usher, became a useful pawn as he attempting to defend the King—who also happens to be his father—and justify the PUP Parliamentary Council’s support for the party leader and Prime Minister.

But that was the day BEFORE News 7 showed copies of the Belize Bank documents which, it seems, the Secretary General did not even know existed.

Barrow lashed the Prime Minister for this deception too, “So the man lies to his own son, hangs him out to dry, sacrifices him publicly on this altar of fraud and conspiracy. Well that may be a private family matter, I refer to it only because his son is the Secretary General officially of the PUP and this was said on nationwide TV. It thus illustrates the lengths to which Said Wilbert Musa is prepared to go.”

How far Barrow is prepared to go will be revealed this week as he told the media he plans to send two motions to the National Assembly asking 1) House members to reject the loan arrangements as unlawful 2) declare any payments to the Belize Bank would be illegal.

The Prime Minister was in Taiwan for most of the firestorm but was expected back in Belize on Sunday. Just what sort of reception will greet him is unclear, but Belizeans all over the world are not likely to let him sacrifice other key players so easily this time. They will also expect the opposition to make good on its own promised moves.

Supply Down, Milk Prices Could Rise

Belizean consumers may see some increases in the price of their powdered milk and possibly condensed, evaporated and other dairy products due to heavy demand on European Union countries and a shrinking supply in other parts of the world.

Grace Kennedy Belize says Belizean buyers should be made aware of the current conditions which MAY result in higher prices locally.

According to *Melkweg* Market Report on Milk Powder last month there is a historic high in world market prices for all dairy commodities with heavy pressure on the EU. *Melkweg* cited conditions in a number of producing countries: New Zealand—sold out for the season, Australia—experiencing a drought, USA—not appearing on the market and behind schedule in delivering contracts, India—export ban, Ukraine—seasonal shortage, Argentina—new export tax leading to can-

celed contracts.

According to the report, buying zones such as Algeria, Egypt, Mexico, Brazil, South-East Asia are already experiencing shortages and looking for milk powder and Europe could be next.

According to Fronterra Briefing Notes however, while there is growing demand for fresh milk in many countries, “traditionally, developing markets have shifted from powders to condensed milk to fresh milk as consumers become more sophisticated and more affluent. What we are seeing now is a much faster transition to fresh milk.”

Perhaps Belize’s Mennonites might see some increase in sales if there is a shortage, however, a great many Belizeans still rely on imported products due to refrigeration or other constraints, or simply prefer the taste they grew up on.

Information for this article was supplied by Grace Kennedy Belize Ltd.

Ms ‘Y’ 2007



Mrs. Anita Henry wins Ms ‘Y’ pageant. (see story on pg. 16)

Letters to the Editor

Editorial Director

Meb Cutlack

Editor

Karla Heusner Vernon

General Manager

Trevor Vernon

Design/Layout

William G. Ysaguirre

Published by:

Independent Publishing

Company Ltd.

P.O. Box 2666

Telephones:

(501) 225-3520

Email:

independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com

Printed by:

National Printers

*New Road
Belize City, Belize*

For an online version of the

INdependent Reformer

visit us at

<http://www.belizenorth.com/independentreformer.htm>

OR

<http://belizenews.com/independentonline.pdf>

Testing Our Mettle

Dear Editor,

Greetings. It is a tough environment in Belize taking on 'the powers that be' especially after what has occurred with David Gibson, Christine Perriot and now reports are in the media about Dr Corinth Morter Lewis...People have to be reminded of these 3 cases and similar cases over time. The majority of Belizean public servants are one paycheck away from financial difficulty hence the fear of losing one's job. "Dinero para mis amigos, Bala para mis enemigos y Palo (beatings) para los indecisos"

Business is far stronger than government; government is far stronger than civil society. We have to use some the oil money to strengthen civil society with education (not for the same 20 names that usually get everything, ordinary Belizeans-- not Preferred Belizeans) 20 PhD per year for the next 20 years, 40 MA per year for the next 20 years, 80 BA per year for the next 20 years. This is additional to whatever training is occurring now. It is likely that from these 2800+ people will come our next: Phillip Goldson, Antonio Soberanis, Henry Fairweather (This man planted hundreds of mahogany trees knowing he would not harvest, that's a patriot), David Price, Julian Cho... It's possible that there still is a moratorium on study leave in the public service how will we ever climb out of the hole without education.

How many people could have been educated with \$33 Million? How much money has been collected from the oil company? How many geologists, industrial engineers and surveyors are being trained with the proceeds from oil, mining around Belize? How has the money collected from oil been used? How many

more loan guarantees have been signed? How much is Mahogany Heights worth today? How much was reportedly spent on Mahogany Heights? Keep bringing up these and other issues on our behalf.

signed, Concerned Lecturer

Textbook Standardization Poses Threat to Belizean Printer

Dear Editor,

With the Government's free book giveaway, the Ministry of Education has chosen the Learning Tree reading series for seven of Belize's eight school years. They begin in Infant One. MoE also chose a second set of readers: for Infant One, Fast Phonics written by QADS/MoE and the New Caribbean Readers for Infant Two through Standard Five.

The reasons why MoE/QADS did not include BRC's books in the free give away are complicated, full of questionable, opinionated reasoning and wrong.

BRC's reading method is called Phonics First. The only reading method Ministry of Education accepts is the Whole Language method. By the early 1990's, the Whole Language reading method proved to be a failure in developed nations. It even failed when the parents helped their children and their children spoke English as a first language. It is for that reason that "Hooked on Phonics" was extremely successful. Today the developed world is using phonics based books. BRC is a phonics based book.

Because MoE demands that

schools use the Whole Language method, they have been trying to get BRC's books out of schools. Up until now MoE has not been successful.

Children learn using BRC's phonics first reading method, so BRC has grown in the number of schools using their books. More schools are using BRC's books this year than in any previous year. **Eighty-four percent** of Infant One children in Belize are currently being taught using BRC's Phonics First method.

BRC'S Math and Reading for the first three years of school are used by a very large majority of the children in Belize. I believe that an injustice will be done to the children of Belize if the MoE/GoB plan is carried out. I and BRC's books, will be attacked, but our children's learning cannot be sacrificed.

Thanks Deacon Cal,
BRC Printing Ltd.
E-mail: brc@btl.net

Now available



Independent Reformer Weekly t-shirts are now on sale for \$10.00 when you buy a year's subscription to the paper.

The INdependent Reformer

independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com

P.O. Box 2666
Belize City, Belize

YES!

Send me 6 months of the INdependent Reformer for as little as BZ\$30.00 (US\$30.00 international)

Name _____ (please print)

Address _____ Apt. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email Address _____

Payment Included

Bill me later

Prices for subscription and postage may vary for subscription outside Belize.

SUNDAY, MAY 13, 2007

Happy Mothers' Day



MARK
ESPAT
and the
PUPAlbert Committee
Making Things Happen

Loan backsaid



By: Karla Heusner Vernon

With each new day, there seems to be a new deceit. So it is difficult for me, sitting here on Sunday, May 6, to know what will have transpired by the time you read this. So please forgive me if something major has developed, if there has been a resignation, a call for election, coup, some horrendous bloodshed.

Many Belizeans are feeling that something occurring, even something ugly, is better than no change at all.

Many people have written about, or written to, the man who holds us hostage. They have threatened, they have pleaded, they have tried to appeal to his sense of honor and decency. All, at this writing, to no avail.

What kind of man is he? Perhaps not

even he knows anymore. All I know is it is a mystery to me how a man who was revealed to have lied in the chambers of the House of Representatives while Minister of Immigration EVER rose to be the leader of this country. Why we, the Belizean public allowed

is a ceremonial role; it is the Prime Minister who leads us... wherever he wants us to go.

So many people responded (verbally and by email) to a piece I did recently on going to Chetumal. They all echoed the sentiment that when you are there,

It is the Prime Minister who leads us... wherever he wants us to go.

it, mystifies me still. We should have seen the cut of his jib from early on. But then, he seemed so sincere...

Some will blame the party system, say the PUP chose him for us. If that is so, maybe we have learned our lesson. Maybe it is time we consider the direct election of our Prime Minister or adopt a republican form with a President. Maybe the greatest job in the country should be filled by an applicant who gets more than a few thousand people's votes and the support of a handful of partisan hangers-on. Last week the Belize Times blared, "PUP back Said." More like PUP loans back Said. Lone backside indeed. Like it or not, the GG

a weight is lifted from you, you feel less stressed, more like yourself before everything fell to pieces in our own land. I tried to recapture that feeling this morning when I woke up. I imagined what it would be like if there had been elections and the man so many believe has sold us out, had been ejected from his job.


What if, when we woke up tomorrow, there was a new government? Either a re-formed and reformed PUP, a renewed UDP, or a mixture of either of the above and some VIP or NRP or members of the now forming Alliance. What if there was a new slate, a clean slate, of people ready to represent us?

Would we feel optimistic again? Would the feeling last? Could we rebuild this country, or at least salvage some of her?

I think we must begin to move forward towards this time... we must rise above the current scandals on the ground and think grander thoughts. Write off those who are so flawed in character they can no longer hold their heads up in public, or even within their own families, and usher in people we can respect.

So who? Got any suggestions? Who among the current PUP power structure could we accept if Said should suddenly find religion, or the party suddenly retrieves its backbone? The obvious choices are Mark and Johnny. Or both, one Prime Minister, the other Deputy. Mark knows the tourism market and international banking climate. Johnny knows how to hold this place together in an emergency and has been an integral part of the birth of the oil industry.

But what of Joe? Would we not need his skills to get us back on track? Are there others, working in the background, pushed away or under, who could not be of use...? I say we look at each and ever

(Please Turn To Page 13) 



You've painted yourself into a corner with nowhere to go. Now don't say I didn't warn you!

Ungrateful Bunch?



By: Trevor Vernon

We are witnessing in Belize unusual and incredible phenomena as a direct consequence of the wonderful leadership skills of the duly elected and installed Prime Minister. The man has skills that would make Machiavelli envious; Machiavelli had nothing on this man and his mind. More should aspire to be as great as Musa, instead of criticizing him for the few shortcomings. Once you get beyond those, you will come to appreciate how truly great the man is.

As a leader, Musa has moved Belize out of the darkness... forget the costs, please. The billions in loans that have been built up is merely paper when you think about it; and, Musa will fix it so your children aren't hurt and won't suffer. We now have beautiful roads, a futuristic international airport, great waterways, excellent communication services, uninterrupted power supplies, endless supply of drinking water, impeccable judiciary (he started out as a magistrate), true separation of powers, unmatched education system where the poorest can get a good education, houses galore and cheap too. And money is circulating like crazy, if only for a few. It's not Musa's fault that you can't get any. You cannot blame him for everything.

As a family man, the little we know is that the man has been wildly successful there too. Wildly successful... the envy of most Belizean men and women. The man has had a great many cakes and kept them too, simultaneously.

As a scholar, the man is super well-read... says so right there on his website. Sartre to Satow, the man has mastered them all. Well actually, his website puts it better:

"He is a man of action, yet a closet intellectual, as familiar with Camus and Voltaire, and Vivaldi, as he is with "Baca a' town Blues" and Punta Rebels. From Majestic Alley to Belmopan, Said Musa is the archetype of Kipling's man. He can walk among kings, but still keep the common touch."

And he writes too. He writes up a storm; the envy of world scholars. He wrote and delivered quite a few great speeches. You should see the ones he did in London at exclusives lecture series and Leadership Conferences. The man is the envy of Presidents and Prime Ministers. Pity those don't get released in Belize so you can read

them too. You should have seen the one he delivered at "Whitehall", was it? He lashed the Lord most cruelly during the romance period with Prosser of BTL fame. Why Press Office won't release that one is beyond me. After all he was speaking for the people of Belize and a beautiful speech it was. Wished I had kept a copy, but it was an eyes only document the 'jefa' had said. I guess we have to trust their good judgment to "keep you from hurting yourselves."


Okay, I know what you are saying. Yes, as a leader he has had to be liberal with the facts and with the national treasury. What do you expect? The man has a country to run. A country! It's no easy task. Give the guy a break, okay? He's only human and with the pressures he faces on a daily basis, he deserves a little something extra. Okay? Relax, its not that bad. Wait till you get the other guy then let's hear what samba you'll sing then when he does what he has to do.

And the man Said W. Musa, excuse me, The Right Honorable Said W. Musa, has paid his dues and has earned everything he has the good old fashioned way: hard work. Please. Let's not argue and fight about this. It says so on his very own official webpage. Oh, you want a reference? I'll stick it in at the end. Here's what it says, and we have no reason to question this:

"Said Musa has been in public life for the past twenty five years. During this time he worked and served Belize as Attorney General; Minister of Edu-

cation; Foreign Affairs; Economic Development; Sports and Culture. He has won four general elections as the representative of the Fort George constituency of Belize City. He has earned his stripes."

I say we need to amend the consti-

tution and name this guy President-for-life. What will that take? Well, we have another wonderful world class attorney & scholar to figure that out. Let Ghandi figure it out like he has figured everything else out for the (Please Turn To Page 10) 

Operations Executive – International Company

The successful candidate will be responsible for coordinating the branch management across the entire operation and must be able to drive the relevant performance indicators and deliver business results.

Principal Responsibilities include but not limited to:

- **Monitoring of Business Performance**
Monitor business performance in branch operations and develop/implement performance improvement measures
- **Delivering Agreed KPIs**
Develop and execute specific initiatives to sustain the drive for attaining or exceeding business goals, including budgetary targets, profitability and service excellence within branches
- **Managing and Motivating Personnel**
Effectively manage personnel to ensure that each achieves his/her individual and team accountabilities, while creating an environment in which all personnel are motivated to contribute to the goals of the business.

The successful candidate must have:

- Relevant experience in the Retail business, having a proven track record in leading a team to deliver business results.
- Significant strengths in general management or branch operations, having functioned at senior level for a minimum of 5 years.
- Strong capability to partner with and to influence stakeholders at all levels of the organization.
- Drive and be a self starter with good communication skills
- High flexibility; being able to travel throughout the country at short notice.
- A Clean driver's licence

Deadline is May 18th, 2007.

Please mail your resume to:

Horwath Belize
P.O. Box 756
Belize City,
Belize



Try all
QUALITY SINCE 1922
Grace
Canned
Vegetables

Available at your
favourite
Supermarket or
Grocery Store.

Distributed by:
GraceKennedy(Belize) Ltd.

Israel reiterates its strong support for OAS programs

Israel's strong interest in continuing to support programs of the Organization of American States (OAS) was the subject of discussion as Assistant Secretary General Albert R. Ramdin this week received Ambassador Dorit Shavit, Director General for Latin America and the Caribbean in the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ambassador Shavit was at the Organization's headquarters on a courtesy visit.

Ambassador Ramdin briefed the visiting Israeli official and her delegation on the Western Hemisphere organization's principal objectives and thrusts—around the promotion of democracy and human rights, integral development and security from a multidimensional perspective. He explained as well the range of issues and activities that will be presented to the OAS General Assembly—to be held June 3 to 5 in Panama City—which the Israeli diplomat will also be attending.

Ramdin made mention of the special OAS support for Haiti and the need for support to vulnerable economies in the Caribbean and Central America. The



Assistant Secretary General Albert R. Ramdin receives Ambassador Dorit Shavit, Director General for Latin America and the Caribbean and Minister Michael Eligal, Latin America & Caribbean Division.

Assistant Secretary General and Ambassador Shavit also reviewed OAS programs that currently enjoy support from Israel, including some under the Young Americas Business Trust (YABT), whose Chief Executive Officer Roy Thomasson was among those on hand for meeting. The Director of the OAS Department of External Relations, Irene Klinger, was also present.

Shavit identified other potential areas of interest, such as courses in governance and security, in which her government is willing to provide additional assistance. Ramdin conveyed the Organization's deep appreciation for the interest as well as the longstanding support and collaboration it receives from Israel, a permanent observer since 1972 and thus one of the first countries to be granted that status with the OAS.

Accompanying Ambassador Shavit on the visit to the OAS were Michael Eligal of the Latin America and Caribbean Division of the Israeli Foreign Ministry and Oren Anolik, Alternate Representative of Israel's Permanent Observer Mission to the OAS.

UPF Ambassadors donate recorders to Cayo schools

Students of the Seven Day Adventist Primary School in Santa Elena and the San Antonio RC Primary School in San Antonio Village can now have music lessons to play the recorder, thanks to the Universal Peace Federation (UPF).

UPF Chairman for the Cayo District and Ambassador for Peace Mr. Ivan Roberts, and Ambassadors for Peace Dr. Katsuhiko Ando and his son Yoshiaki Ando, both from Japan, donated ten recorders to the two schools on Monday, April 2.

Dr. Katsuhiko Ando and his son also performed a few magic tricks for the children during the presentations. Dr. Katsuhiko Ando, a commercial banker and a dear friend of Mr. Roberts, brought these recorders from donors in Japan. Mr. Roberts said that the UPF is currently running a number of educational programs in Belize and as the Chairman for the Cayo District, and a candidate for the up coming general election, he will make sure that as many schools within the Cayo District, partake in these programs.

Mr. Roberts, with his eye on the Cayo Central Constituency, said that



Cayo students thanked Ambassadors for Peace Mr. Ivan Roberts, Dr. Katsuhiko Ando and his son Yoshiaki Ando for the gift of the recorders and were entertained by their magic tricks.

the UPF is currently awaiting another shipment of computers and those

schools who have already submitted their request for computers will be

receiving their computers as soon as they arrive in Belize.

For an online version of the INdependent Reformer visit us at <http://www.belizenorth.com/independentreformer.htm>

PNP & We the People reprove UHS Guarantee Pledge to Limit Government Power by Constitutional Reform

The key issue in the scandal around the Universal Health Services guarantee by Prime Minister Said Musa is process. The Prime Minister should never have signed a guarantee to the Belize Bank taking on the debt of UHS without going through the process outlined in our Constitution which requires approval from the National Assembly. The fact that the PM did not have proper authority to take on this debt yet was able to hide his activities and evade accountability shows that our Constitution needs reform in order to limit the discretionary power of elected officials.

We are not a free nation if the of-

fice of the Prime Minister can hold so much power and our directly elected representatives in the National Assembly are not able to provide any checks on his power because they are oblivious to his actions. Belize needs Constitutional reform that places defined limits on power with no loopholes like having "prior approval of Cabinet," as is allowed under the Finance and Audit Act, which states that the PM can spend more money on a project without the approval of the National Assembly if he has gotten approval for the project previously. Belize needs stronger checks on discretionary power of government offi-

cial or the people will continue to pay the price for the mistakes and abuses of elected officials that act without regard for process or rule of law.

Cabinet ministers cannot be excused by claiming ignorance. It is the individual responsibility of each minister to be aware of what the Prime Minister is doing because he or she is responsible to the public for what the GOB does. Section 44(2) of the Constitution states that the Cabinet is responsible "for all things done by or under the authority of any Minister in the execution of his office." Further, The Public Finance Committee is responsible

for ensuring greater oversight of public finances. Professing ignorance does not inspire confidence in leadership and it should not prevent voters from holding cabinet ministers accountable on election day. Exercising our right to vote for another candidate is the ultimate limit on the power of government officials.

Meanwhile Belize still lacks a public health care system and building one becomes more difficult with an unstable and unpredictable government. Corruption and lack of good governance hold back the development of Belize's public infrastructure and private enterprise.

Press Release

VIP condemns intimidation of ACB

The VIP condemns the attempt by Mr. Phil Johnson of the Belize Bank Ltd. to intimidate and harass members of The Association Of Concerned Belizeans who in the practice of their democratic and constitutional rights have filed an action in the Supreme Court to estopp the Government of Belize from unlawfully making payment to the Belize Bank in fulfillment of a purported guarantee on behalf of the Universal Health Services.

The VIP wishes to make it clear to Mr. Michael Ashcroft, the proprietor of the Belize Bank that his

continued hostility towards Belize and Belizeans will be resisted. It is for this reason that the VIP has closed its account with the Belize Bank and is encouraging other community minded individuals and organizations to do likewise. At the same time the VIP assures the bank's employees that this action has become necessary as a last resort to bring to the fore issues relating to our governance which have disproportionately favored the proprietor of the Belize bank at the expense of ordinary Belizeans.

It clear to the VIP that election

campaign financing must be the critical issue surrounding this matter. It is an issue that both the PUP and the UDP have failed to address even though this issue alone has done untold damage to our financial and economic system. In the interest of our nation, the VIP therefore takes this opportunity to call on both political parties to immediately address the matter of election campaign financing.

At the same time the VIP also wishes to lend its support to the work of the ACB and Honorable Senator Godwin Hulse whose tire-

less efforts have assisted in highlighting the corrupt practices of the current government administration.

The purported guarantee by Government on behalf of a private entity, the UHS is a shameless and despicable act perpetuated on the people of Belize that must not go unchallenged.

The current crisis demands that GOB makes known all of the facts on this issue and that the matter be debated fully in the National Assembly before any action is taken regarding payment on the guarantee. *Press Release*

SPEAR condemns UHS guarantee

The Society for the Promotion of Education, Advocacy, and Research (SPEAR), categorically condemns the Government of Belize's conduct as it relates to the reckless signing of an open ended guarantee offered for Universal Health Services private loan of \$33 Million from the Belize Bank Limited and which first came to public knowledge exactly eight months ago.

In reviewing the time-line of events from August 2006, SPEAR notes that there have been gross and consistent violations of Good Governance Practices on the part of Government, namely - in its failure to take the matter of a sovereign guarantee to the House of Representatives, which is the national forum for Public Finance debate, in order to have kept Belizeans fully informed. That horrendous act of deception was preceded by the apparently deliberate failure to disclose the UHS guarantee to the

cabinet, failure of a Ministry of Health appointed task force to adequately address the idea of a merger with KHMH because of lack of transparency, and the intent to swap public land in lieu of a private sector debt cancellation.

SPEAR expresses its deep concern over the Government's misguided decisions to risk public monies to guarantee private sector ventures, because such decisions have serious implications for the people of Belize and the nation insofar as they relate to investor confidence, national credibility, the management of the local economy, and therefore to national security.

SPEAR calls on the Prime Minister of Belize to immediately bring this crisis to a final and positive resolution by going back to the House of Representatives for a vote on the matter of the Government of Belize's Sovereign Guarantee to the Belize Bank for the UHS loan.



PRAGMATICA INVESTMENTS

Mile 46, Western Highway
Mount Pleasant, Belmopan
Tel/Fax: 501 822 2290
Cel: 501 620 3535
Email: harrisonbz@yahoo.com

Senior Partner:
Richard Harrison, MBA, BSP Pharm

* MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY

Management Audits
Business Planning & Development
Strategy Development

* FINANCIAL SERVICES

Debt/Equity Planning & Restructuring
Financial Forecasting
Company Formation & Representation

* MARKETING SERVICES

Market Research
Marketing Strategy Development
Product Development Strategy



Current Issues

St Kitts halves Electricity Cost

By: Meb Cutlack

In a little heralded move the government of the tiny island community of St Kitts and Nevis has taken measures to reduce the cost of electricity to consumers by almost half.

At a recent Cabinet meeting under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Dr. Denzil Douglas, it was announced that by using cheaper heavier fuel oil at the generating plant the price of electricity could be cut by 10.5 cents a KWH.

“This conversion, however, will cost the government \$12.6 million over two years,” said Minister of State for Information, Sen. Nigel Carty.

Senator Carty said that Cabinet was concerned about the environmental impact of the use of heavier diesel fuel and therefore they had commissioned an Environmental Impact Assessment, which will be done according to international standards.

The importance of this announcement for Belize is that the Belizean Government, with or without Fortis, could supply the Belizean consumers with electricity at probably half the current price if new ‘clean’ hot bed generating plants were put in place to generate power from our own oil resources.

Going back over 20 years; a Colorado oil man drilled several wells at Belmopan. He reported to government then that one of these wells could electrify Belmopan (as a growing metropolis) for the next 35 years. The cost of using the oil would have given Belmopan power at about 7 cents or less a kilowatt including amortizing the cost of the generating plant.

The Belizean government ignored his conclusion and his research.

It seems we have a government (and it pretty well applies to all our governments since Independence) which puts profit before the interests of the people.

Today Fortis is spending another \$100,000,000 on a third dam - which will not only up the price of our electricity but tie us to a 15% to 20% interest payback in U.S. dollars for the next 50 years. It is ruthless capitalism at its worse and adds an even greater burden to the already outrageous Chalillo dam debt.

We have our own oil and we have

known it since the early 1980’s and yet we have to pay the highest electricity costs in the Western world.

We should be using our own oil to fire our generators and our people should not be deprived of the benefit of the oil discovery but profit from it.

Our cruder oil is some of the finest grade oil on the planet and will

burn directly into generators without expensive refining and yet we have to put up with Chalillo’s huge costs and the high mark up to import expensive fuel oil for generating power.

BEL is a prime example of ‘deals’ which favor rich foreign companies at the expense of Belizean consumers - in the same manner, as BTL

and the former water company WASA were ‘sold off’.

The ongoing and extraordinary deception over the UHS hospital scandal is just one more deception engineered at the expense of all Belizeans.

What a shame our government does not follow the lead of the leader of St. Kitts and Nevis.

HOUSE FOR SALE



By Owner
 +Exclusive Ladyville neighborhood
 +Quiet cul-de-sac in close knit, security conscious community

+Two bedrooms, two bath
 +Newly constructed home office/ sunporch
 +Fully tiled, laundryroom, vat, generous yard, fully fenced 6’ high

Perfect for young family or retirees
Asking US \$75,000

contact Independent Weekly

Belize Affordable Web Design

www.belize-affordable-web-design.com



607-9637 or 668-9171

amedeus13@hotmail.com

created by: *Leslie*

Original Web-Site building at reasonable prices

The Fruits of Our Sweat!

By: Richard Harrison

My rough estimate of the domestic market for fresh fruits in Belize is around BZ\$30 million per annum. This market can be expected to continue to increase exponentially as Belizeans become more health conscious, as their incomes and education improve, and also as a result of the growing tourism market.

This market is very important for the small and medium producers, who naturally depend on the domestic market to consume what they produce. Hence, the growth and development of this sub-sector is vital to livelihood of thousands of persons, from backyard growers to street market vendors.

One backyard grower mentioned to me that he was paid BZ\$500 by a fruit trader, for all the avocados on one of the trees in his yard. He did not have to lift a finger, as the trader brought his helpers and they harvested the fruits themselves. My estimate of current demand for avocado in Belize is BZ\$3 - 5 million at the farm gate; if the fruit was made available year round as it is in Mexico, and the culture of consuming avocado was promoted to the general population. The **current harvest** is estimated to value less than BZ\$1 million per year to the farmer.

My information is that 95% of the avocado trees currently in production are from varieties that bear fruit from July to October, only 4 months of the year. Only five percent are from the varieties that bear fruit outside of this "window". Hence, there is a glut during the months from July to October, over-supplying the market demand during this period. This causes increased competition during those months, which in turn causes the price to be relatively low. At these low prices; farmers, traders and retailers can only realize a nominal profit from their investments; while the consumers "gain" by paying a lower price.

The avocados that "come in" before July are called early varieties. Those that deliver fruit after October are called late varieties. Farmers that have early and late varieties harvest their crop during a period that avocado is relatively scarce, hence they have less competition for their produce, and they can sell for a higher price during those months. Early and late avocados sell with ease for as high as BZ\$1.50 per fruit. At this price, farmers, traders and retailers stand to make a decent profit; while the consumers "lose" by paying a higher price.

I suggest that the market determines what the consumer is willing and able to pay for a produce. I suggest that the consumer is interested in having avocados available all year round, and thus "lose" by not having this demand

fulfilled. The consumer may thus be willing and able to pay BZ\$1.50 for a good quality avocado; if it was made available all year round.

It is known that Belize already has the varieties that would allow year-round production of avocados. It is also known that the agronomic conditions in the north, central and south regions of Belize provide ideal and differential conditions for segmentation of the crop varieties by geographical regions; so that different parts of the country can harvest during different periods of the year. This opens the possibilities for significant trading activity for this fruit between these regions; as each region in production sells to the region that is out of production. This is the promise that can result from production and market planning.

This kind of scenario exists for many fruits that can be produced in Belize. The fruit market can become a lot more important to the livelihood of many lower and middle income families. This importance can be enhanced if the fruit production is concentrated in clusters of backyard gardens in villages with close proximity, so that production, harvesting and handling factors could be consolidated at rationalized costs.

Both agronomic and cultural characteristics can be taken into account in this planning. While some villages are well suited agronomically and culturally to growing crops such as tomato, cabbage and lettuce; others might be more suited to growing backyard fruit trees that does not require daily and intense care.

The San Estevan to Sarteneja rim already has a history of avocado production which can be enhanced. The villages along the old northern highway, the stretch from Roaring Creek to Esperanza and the villages from Pomona to Punta Gorda are ideal locations for setting up backyard avocado production clusters.

Belize only needs about 10,000 mature avocado trees to supply the entire domestic demand. Avocado trees take approximately 5 years to bear fruit. If more trees than this are propagated, in the absence of an export market, then the domestic market will be over-supplied, the prices will fall and the incentive for the farmer-trader-retailer chain will be extinguished, defeating the entire purpose of the exercise. Brooks Tropicals, the same company that now exports most of 'our' papaya, is also developing a lucrative world-trade in avocados.

Belize has various cooperation agreements with Mexico. Mexico has

been very successful at penetrating the large US market with exports of their fresh avocados. They have mature production and market experience that they are willing to share with us. There is a growing market for processed avocado, especially for avocado oil which is used in expensive cosmetic products. It would take a one-year cooperation with Mexican help, to graft 10,000 avocado trees of the appropriate varieties, and have them ready for planting in the designated cluster villages at a nominal cost to the farmers. Within five-six years we would have added another \$3 - 4 million dollars to the pockets of small and medium farmers, especially as supplemental income to families who grow fruits in their backyard; potentially increasing their wealth.

When small and medium producers increase their income by \$3 - 4 million; they increase their savings, investments and consumption in the rest of the economy, causing a multiplier effect of potentially BZ\$20 million.

Service industries develop as a periphery to production enterprise. It is a fallacy to believe that an economy can become dependent entirely on a service sector, without having its own production base, or a strong financial integration to production bases such as does Switzerland to Europe, Hong Kong to China, Bahamas to the USA, and Ireland to the USA/UK. Production is still the core around which sustainable services develop. Fad services can and do develop without a production core, however these are highly likely to be unsustainable and short-lived.

The avocado-scenario exist with many other factors of production within the Belize economy that can improve the livelihood of small and medium producers; and hence the general economy.

Improving the small and medium producers economy is lifting up the country from its base. It is the setting of a very strong foundation upon which to build, with dignity for the least among us. The already wealthy

will become even more so, as the small and medium producers earn more income and can demand more services and goods that the wealthy 'control'.

The mango blossom this year seems a little light. This might mean a less-than-bountiful harvest of ripe mango for small and medium farmers. This might mean that consumers will have to settle for green mango or "curtido" mango, as the farmers cannot leave the fruits to wither on the trees from lack of water. Farmers that depend on mango for supplementing their income may see a little 'haad time' this year.

Imagine if we concentrated our fruits production in village clusters within the various agronomic regions of the country. Imagine if we had more irrigation of fruits trees? Imagine if we were constantly improving our fruit-tree varieties to obtain the more dominant genetics that give higher yields and better quality fruits, and are disease resistant. Imagine if we had as many volunteers pollinating our fruit trees during blossom season, as we do for the climb up Victoria Peak, walk-a-tons, and other such "fund-raisers"? Imagine if we had more agriculture professionals who dedicated their lives to improving our agricultural production instead of pushing paper in air-conditioned offices or offering 'consultancy' services? Imagine if we grew more honey bees near the clusters of villages that produce backyard fruits. More of our blossoms would turn to fruits. More of our fruits would become ripened and sweet.

When last did you see a healthy and ripe local guava, or custard apple or sour-sop? Much less toki? Something is happening to some of our "indigenous" fruits; such that if nothing is done; future generations might only hear stories that such fruits existed in Belize.

Do Belize and Belizeans wish to harvest more ripe and sweet fruits in its future? Must we beware of the fruits of our sweat?

DIAL

0-800-922-TIPS
(0-800-922-8477)

**WE PAY CASH FOR
INFORMATION
ON ANY UNSOLVED CRIMES**



A Centennial Community Program Coordinated by the Rotary Club of Belize.

Identity and belonging, rooted in the land

Kate Heartfield, The Ottawa Citizen

The tiny country of Belize can teach a big lesson to Canada, if Canada bothers to pay attention. The lesson is this: If you reform property rights on reserves, you had better do it right.

Belize is a former British colony. It has a reservation system that encompasses part of the land the Mayans see as their ancestral territory.

If you believe that only individuals have rights, the whole question of what to do with communal land is simple: Chop it into parcels, distribute the parcels and call it a day. The principle appeals to me, because private land ownership makes economic sense. In practice, there are hundreds of ways to mess up that kind of project, to create bitterness and litigation that can last years.

Jim Prentice, Canada's minister for aboriginal affairs, is trying to step gently onto thin ice by encouraging private home ownership on reserves while preserving communal land ownership. We'll see if it works, and what the next step is.

In Belize, the government's approach hasn't been working very well, at least if you ask many of the Mayans, or the University of Toronto legal team that is pressing their case.

The Mayans and the government have been disputing resource and property

rights all over southern Belize. The government is understandably eager to grant logging and oil concessions. Private land ownership encourages development and investment: good things in a poor country, but not without safeguards for the ecology and human rights.

In 2001, the government began handing out leases and grants in the village of San Pedro Columbia, which is inside a reservation.

According to Sarah Perkins, the acting director of the International Human Rights Program at the U of T faculty of law, this process has displaced about 200 families in San Pedro Columbia because the leases haven't respected the customary land use patterns of the Mayan farmers. "We have significant numbers of people who have been displaced and no longer use the land that their families have occupied for generations."

Ms. Perkins, who is now a lawyer, was a student at the U of T when she became involved in this project in 2003. She and other students and faculty travelled to Belize in the intervening years to gather evidence. With the help of Belizean and Canadian lawyers, the U of T team is now bringing a challenge on behalf of Mayans to the Supreme Court of Belize.

Paul Schabas, a Canadian lawyer who is working on the case pro bono and just got back from Belize, says the case could influence common law in Canada. Belize's constitution is similar to our own, and of course we have communal land rights here, although the situation of subsistence farmers in the small country of Belize is not very analogous to the situation in Kashechewan in northern Ontario.

I lived in Belize for 10 months in 1994 and 1995. I spent about half that time in the one-phone village of Georgetown, on a dirt road off the Southern Highway. Georgetown is populated by Garifuna people, descended from a mix of escaped African slaves with peoples indigenous to South America and the Caribbean.

If you walk about two kilometres further down the road that runs through Georgetown, you come to the village of Maya Mopan, where Mayan people live and farm.

As a Canadian, I had trouble getting used to the idea of communities based, even unofficially, on ethnicity. Georgetown was almost entirely Garifuna; Maya Mopan was almost entirely Mayan. The people did business with each other and went to the same soccer games, but that mile of dirt road was always there. The

people on either end of the mile spoke different languages, wore different clothing, ate different food.

I hear Belize is changing, slowly. Most of the Southern Highway, little better than a mud track when I was there, has been paved. Other forces, including private land ownership, threaten the idea of discrete ethnic communities. "There's a lot of evidence that when you allow land to be alienable, the community on that land disappears very quickly," says Ms. Perkins.

I don't know if communities such as Maya Mopan or San Pedro Columbia will be able to survive intact and unadulterated forever, and to be honest I'm not sure they should.

I do know that a sustainable economy must be based on respect for sound agricultural and forestry practices, and that whatever a government does with land must be done in full consultation with the people who already live there. So I wish the Canadians involved in this Belizean legal challenge luck: Perhaps both countries will learn something about how to make change while respecting land and people.

Kate Heartfield is a member of the Citizen's editorial board.

U.S. Embassy announces Ambassador's HIV Prevention Program

Belmopan – The United States Embassy is pleased to announce the 2007 Ambassador's HIV Prevention Program. This program is intended to further the United States Government's commitment to combat HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean region and in Belize. This is the fifth consecutive year for this program which has provided over BZ\$167,000 to local initiatives that might not otherwise receive financial support.

The Embassy invites proposals from community-based organizations, local non-governmental organizations, clubs, individuals and the Belize government to develop and implement HIV-related activities. This year, the Ambassador's HIV Prevention Program will support community initiatives that will specifically focus on HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination.



US Ambassador Robert Dieter

Interested persons may contact the Embassy at 822-4011, extension 4308, for additional information and proposal guidelines.

The deadline to submit proposals is close of business Friday, June 8, 2007.

Ungrateful Bunch?

➡ (Continued From Page 4)

government and people of the jewel. He'll fix it up for us and make it acceptable to the other international scholars and the international community at large. So what if we go to a Republican Form of government so we can make him President for a very, very long time? What's so bad about that? We deserve no less and he has earned his stripes.

So please, the next time you hear people grumbling about the stuff Musa has done that's not-so-good, tell them to stop belly-aching and go out and do something productive. The man works hard for all of us and even he is prone to make slips here and there but its all for the good of Belize. Some people have life so easy they actually have time to bellyache, instead of thanking their lucky stars to

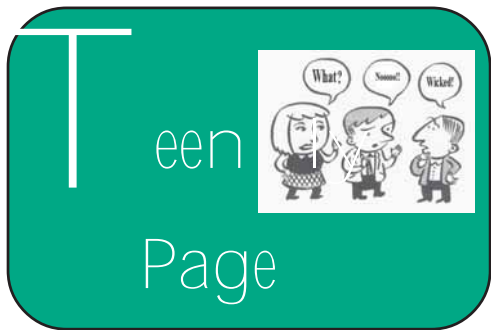
have gotten a "Kipling's man" for Prime Minister. Geese! What a thankless bunch of "Naysayers." And no, I've gotten it from impeccable sources: the man isn't resigning because of some trip up the datted media did to him with UHS and the Belize Bank. And he isn't calling early elections either. Get over it. We have the most wonderful Prime Minister Belize will ever see, even if V.S. Naipaul doesn't think so.

Okay. Here are the website references:

- 1) Musa's homepage: http://www.belize.gov.bz/pm_profile.html
- 2) V.S. Naipaul's nasty comments about Belizeans: http://www.stabroeknews.com/index.php/article_sunday_features?id=56519209



Reservations: 501-226-2012
 U.S. Toll Free: 800-422-3435
 Fax: 501-226-2338
 Email: reservations@tropicaire.com
www.tropicaire.com



MOTHERS

We all know that we can't live without mothers. They care for us and help us when you need it the most. They love us and hug us for no reason at all.

They were there when no one else was. When it felt like the world was crashing down all around us they held on tight. They love us even when we

fall, when we mess things up, when we are mad and even when we think we don't love them.

SO HAPPY MOTHERS DAY!!!!!! MAY YOU BE BLESSED ON YOUR SPECIAL DAY!

-Abigail Marshall

Mothers are awesome, cool, and fun, and there the only one .

They make U laugh they make U cry

But they're always there for U ..

When U have done wrong tell put U in your place.

When U've done right they'll be there to reward U.

-Julia Heusner



ARIES (Mar. 21- April 20)

Take advantage of your attributes and lure the mate of your choice. Extravagance will be a problem. Organize social events or family gatherings. You can buy or sell if you're so inclined. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

TAURUS (Apr. 21- May 21)

Don't point your finger unjustly at others. You will have the stamina and the know how to raise your earning power. Be prepared to make changes to your personal documents. You will have the stamina and the know how to raise your earning power. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21)

Travel will enhance romance and adventure. this week will be hectic. Avoid joint ventures and steer clear of groups that want you to contribute financial assistance. Look after financial transactions this week. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

You'll be dropping friends for no apparent reason. Don't force your opinions on friends or relatives unless you are prepared to lose their favor. Think before you act. Rewards, gifts, or money from investments or taxes can be expected. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

LEO (July 23-Aug 22)

Don't push your luck with your boss. Don't involve yourself in the emotional problems of those you work with. Sudden trips will take you by surprise. You may be frustrated by the way situations are being handled in your personal life. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 -Sept. 23)

You may have a problem keeping secrets. You can expect to have problems with your mate if you've been spending too much time away from home. Problems with relatives and friends could surface. You will find that money could slip through your fingers. Your lucky day

this week will be Friday.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 -Oct. 23)

Emotional matters may not be easy for you to handle. Stick to your own projects and by the end of the day you'll shine. You will get along well with your colleagues this week. New projects may lead you into a dead end. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)

Don't overdo it. You need to enjoy yourself. Your high enthusiasm will be sure to inspire anybody around you. Your interest in helping others may take you back to school. You can expect the fur to fly on the home front. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 -Dec. 21)

Emotional relationships will be plentiful if you attend group activities. Don't overspend on friends or children. Get into some activities that will help you in making new friends. Your mind is on moneymaking ventures. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22.- Jan. 20)

You can make career changes that may put you in a much higher earning bracket. Female members of your family may be difficult to deal with. Your ability to communicate with ease will win the hearts of those you are in touch with this week. You can win points if you present your ideas this week. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.



AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 -Feb. 19)

Lack of funds may add stress to your already uncertain situation. Short trips will be educational. Do not get involved with individuals who are already committed to others. Your lack of attention may have been a factor. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

PISCES (Feb. 20-Mar. 20)

You can make sound financial investments if you act fast. Get the whole family involved in a worthwhile cause or cultural event. Professionalism will be of utmost importance. Unexpected visitors are likely. Be prepared to do your chores early. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

Full Service Airline With over 180 daily scheduled flights throughout Belize and Flores in Guatemala

Charters also available



TROPIC AIR

The Airline of Belize



Reservations: 523-3410
reservations@tropicair.com
www.tropicair.com

Examples of PUP Discrimination Against the People of Toledo



By: William Schmidt
PG correspondent for
INdependent Weekly

Recently Mr. Candido Coh, from the Toledo Ecotourism Association (TEA) group in San Jose, went to see Dr. Ludwick Palacio, General Manager of the Toledo Development Corporation (TDC) to ask him if there has been any word from the Ministry of National Resources regarding their communities request for making their community conservation area (part of the Toledo People's Eco park Plan) a protected area. He reminded him of the many meetings and letters that have been submitted over the last years including the one presented only a few months ago.

Dr. Palacio replied that he has received no answer yet. Mr. Coh asked if the TDC zone representative for San Jose, Mr. Emeterio Sho, a member of the TDC's board had recommended it. When Dr. Palacio said he had, Mr. Coh asked "why then hasn't the Ministry responded?" Dr Palacio said, he didn't know.

When Mr. Sho was running for zone

representative for the TDC he met with the San Jose group asking them to vote for him. They said they would if he would support the Toledo People's Eco Park Plan, he agreed. The members traveled all the way to Cattle Landing to cast their votes for him. Mr. Vicente Sackul, Chairman of the Toledo Ecotourism association (TEA) has also asked the Toledo Development Corporation zone representative for Laguna village Mr. Ardiano Cucul to recommend their community's conservation area CCA, and he said he would. Now they are asking what use is it to have zone representatives on the Toledo Development Corporation Board if the government will not respect them or the General Manager? If San Jose and the other villages don't get their community conservation areas officially protected. The farmers will eventually cut all the trees for their milpas. Where will the tourist groups take their tourists if there is no protected place for them to see the animals and plants they come to see? How will the valuable trees and animals themselves survive?

The members of the TEA from 14 villages have been asking the People's United Party, Ministry of Lands and Natural Resources for the eight long years they have been in power to help them get their communities conservation areas protected for the benefit of all the villagers and the endangered flora and fauna of the area and to help to keep their tourism programs sus-

tainable.

When the tourists go to the TEA Village Guesthouse Eco Trail Program where will they take them if there is no Eco Trail? The big conservation non-governmental organizations who get funds and support from outside of Belize always gets the government's support. The TEA won the world's prize for the most socially responsible community based eco tourism program, and is one of, if not the oldest indigenous conservation, development organization in the nation. TEA is going on seventeen years in operation now. If this lack of support isn't proof of the Peoples United Party's discrimination against the Maya and other peoples of Toledo District, I would like to know what is.

When will the people of Belize, especially Toledo, demand that those entrusted with important leadership roles in our nation tell the truth! The slogan, "the truth shall set you free" is well understood by those who keep on lying to our people, if our People's United Party government truly wanted to decentralize and have the people participate in real democratic planning and development, if they really wanted "power to the people", they would welcome and support the Toledo People's Eco Park Plan by and for all the people of Toledo.

In the seventeen years of the TEA's existence, there have been occasions when the Belize Tourism Board threw the TEA a few crumbs to cover-up their gross neglect. Once they printed

a few brochures and posters, another time after severe pressure, they allowed them to have a desk in the Belize Tourism Board office in Punta Gorda Town.

In 2000 the TEA executive found out the Belize Tourism Board was telling people who inquired about the TEA at the Belize Tourism Board's office in Belize City, that the TEA in Toledo no longer existed!

After all these years of meetings, letters, phone calls, newspaper articles, what else can we do? It's been said that all that's needed for bad people to get away with bad things, is for good people to stand by and say and do nothing to prevent it. I'm doing my best. Concerned citizens of Belize and Toledo, what are you going to do? Demand a stop to the discrimination! Support the Toledo Peoples Eco Park and power to the people. Demand that our PUP government tell the truth and allow our people to free themselves!



THE hunt FOR HEALTHY FOOD

with Anthony Hunt

SUMATHI INDIAN RESTAURANT

Princess Margaret Drive, Belize City

Indian Cuisine has always been associated in my book with the Curry. And nothing is better than a spicy curry and roti. Thusly, it is with this in the back of my head that I headed on over to the recently upgraded "Ready Call" building and the long time location of really the only Indian Restaurant that I know of in the city. When I got there though, I changed my mind (in a good way) and ventured out to order the Butter Chicken. It sounds fattening, but it wasn't and the Nan that accompanied this very "red" dish was good too. All of this and I could still smell the curry from the kitchen. Service was a little slow, but the change of pace from the rice-n-beans of our daily lives to the extensive menu of the subcontinent is well worth the effort you make to get over to the north side. By the way I did sneak a "sample" of the samosas, and they was good. So put some spice into life and try Indian. Mi don taalk!



OPEN DAILY
Prices: \$10.00 and up

A Free and Active Press: A Pillar of Democracy

Statement by US Ambassador to Belize, Robert Dieter.

May 3 marks the 17th anniversary of World Press Freedom Day, a day on which the World recognizes the important contributions of a free press and honors the sacrifices of those who have risked their lives and their fortunes for the sake of a free press. Freedom of the press is a key component of democratic governance and is essential to a strong civil society. A free and vigorous press fosters active debate, investigative reporting, and a forum to express views – particularly on behalf of those who are marginalized in society.

Unfortunately, the press is too often a target of retaliation by those who feel threatened by freedom of expression and transparency in democratic processes. Every day around the world, brave journalists – who are often the first to uncover corruption, to report from the front lines of conflict zones, and to highlight missteps by governments – face harassment, beatings, detention, imprisonment and even death in retribution for their efforts to expose the truth. The instruments of repression include government interference, censorship, or control of the media, disruption of distribution networks, restriction of the Internet, and laws targeting indepen-

dent press outlets. Such actions limit a nation's ability to find its voice and become a flourishing democracy.

The United States and Belize, along with other like-minded and democratic nations, must continue to do our part to ensure a safe and non-violent environment for the free flow of ideas and public discourse. A new report from the Organization of American States noted that 19 journalists in the Americas were murdered in 2006 for "reasons that could be connected with the exercise of freedom of expression." The report also states that more than 200 instances of assaults and threats were made in the Americas against "communicators" in 2006. These incidents frequently are not investigated or fully prosecuted.

Every year the U.S. provides professional development opportunities for journalists, editors, and media managers around the world. Belizean journalists have benefited from these exchanges in the past and will again in 2007. The U.S. will continue to promote a free and active press, in partnership with other governments, multilateral institutions, NGOs and individuals around the world. While we engage in these efforts year-round, the U.S. Department of State is honoring World Press Freedom Day by offering special publications, webchats, and dia-

logues in May and June. I encourage you to visit the State Department's public diplomacy website, <http://usinfo.state.gov>, to learn more about these programs.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice observed that "there is no more important pillar of democracy than a free and active press." Democratic societies

are not infallible, but they are accountable, and the exchange of ideas is the foundation for accountable governance. As African-American author, statesman, and reformer Frederick Douglass noted in an 1860 speech, "Liberty is meaningless where the right to utter one's thoughts and opinions has ceased to exist."



Loan backsaid

☞ (Continued From Page 4)
one, at their track records and accomplishments. Most of all at their public record of veracity and accountability. Have they declared their assets? Do they have offshore accounts?

Within the UDP, who is a reasonable choice? Many will assume its Barrow. But who will support him? Who is ready to step up, should he someday need to step down? Some feel the weakness of the UDP is the concentration of skill and power in too one set of hands. Is that something we are willing to gamble on? To trust? Or do we need to see other players be given responsibilities instead of sidelined if they get too popular. Carlos Perdomo wrote a fine piece in the Guardian this week. In a time when our national moral fiber is in shreds, might he not be a useful compass?

There is Zenaida, or there could be. Saddled with Belize City debt and garbage, her baptism by fire would serve her well as we try to extricate ourselves from the national debt and carnage.

And Lois? UDP or ACB? Or both. I don't personally care which, as long as she can serve and continue as watchdog, keep BTL and Ashcroft in check. She could run for PM.

And of the Independents? Godwin Hulse, the nation is calling you... will you answer? Will you cloak yourself in the Belizean Flag and run a victory lap for us too?

Who will emerge in the Alliance? Names are already being floated, some good ones. We will watch with interest.

I guess all I am saying is we have choices. We do not have to accept what we have already been given or what some would want us to believe is written in stone forevermore. Belize does not have to be or dragged down this path to nowhere anymore. We deserve better. And we can get it.

FOR SALE: One Bradley's 25Ft. Pelican like new. BZD \$16,000.00 OBO. CALL: 601-8854 FOR INFO.

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.**

Guest Gallery

A few weeks ago, the Independent Reformer published some photos of mangroves by naturalist Christian Zeigler. We got such a great response from readers we decided to create a special section called "Guest Gallery" for submissions from other photographers,

amateur and professional. As the month of May begins, it just so happens **Mike Heusner** has been out taking photos of some of the magnificent trees now in bloom along the river and near his fishing resort, Belize River Lodge. In March he also captured an interest-

ing leg of La Ruta Maya which most spectators never get a chance to see, as the canoeists enter the tangle of mangroves at the mouth of the Haulover Creek.

In addition we have some submissions from **Leslie Kearns** of Affordable Web-site Design who en-

joyed the rodeo at the National Agriculture Show last weekend.

Please enjoy. If you or anyone you know is interested in having your photographs in our Guest Gallery, please email jpg or tiff images to karlavernon_belize@yahoo.com.



This young equestrian knows how to get her pony to corner around a barrel.



This young bull rider has all the right stuff!



Time often stands still in Belize, especially along the quiet banks of a river.



The flamboyant's blossoms are a blaze of colour against their verdant setting.



Flamboyant is the only way to describe the lush colour of the tree in bloom.



No need for a gardener to plant flowers when the mayflower strews her blossoms across the lawn.

Poet's Corner

Inspired by the Life of Edgar X Richardson, by River of Fire

Eye of the tiger, roar of the lion
Dare to be wiser, and always stand strong
General with no army, his mind and his hands
Admiral with no navy, the maritime demands
Remember my mentor, won't forget my friend

X is for Pan African, Christian not Islam

Remember my mentor, won't forget my friend
I fought beside you before, and we will fight this war once again
Can you remember Mediggon, where the first battle began
Hear on Focal Point, the local global joint
A repeat programming point, sealed, delivered and sight
Remember my mentor, won't forget my friend
Dared to be wiser, and always stood strong
Soldier, father, husband, and a real black man
One brother who fought long, real Pan African
Now remember my mentor, won't forget my friend

Beauty blooms at Cashew Fest 2007



Miss Sherice Banner won little Miss Cashew Fest Queen in Crooked Tree.

INdependent Classifieds

Wrobelize Consulting
 Phone: 501-225-9041
 General Business & Real Estate Consulting - Escrow Services - Property Searches and more.
 Visit our website at www.wrobelize.com for more information or email us at wrobelize@gmail.com

Tropical SPA - Stressed out in the City? Pamper yourself at Tropical Spa with a massage, facial, pedicure, manicure, acrylic and gel nails, or eyebrow threading. Reasonable rates. Call 280-1011 for appointment. Located at #42 Albert Street (downstairs of Heusner's Dentistry).

"Free international real estate and investment blog and podcast. Go to <http://investtheworld.blogspot.com> as

we travel the world for fun, investment and profit."

Free Ads!

The INdependent Reformer is offering free classified ads for the month of May:

- 1) 20 words or less
- 2) one ad per person in the promotional period for free (additional ads are only \$10 each)
- 3) with photo (first time free...\$10 additional for photo ads)

jpeg or tiff formats only. **Must be emailed, no disk pickup or drop off**
4) business card -first run is free for month of May, 2007, \$20 a run thereafter

5) All classified ads must be emailed to independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com with cc to kheusner@yahoo.com and checks to PO Box 2666, Belize City. Please note: We must receive your ad by Friday at mid-day for inclusion in following Tuesday issue.

Land For Sale



70 acres in Burrell Boom for US\$50K

independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com

1/2 acre lots in Burrell Boom starting at \$10K

independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com

Single-12 acre plot in Ladyville \$120 K

independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com

Ms Y Pageant, more gracious than ever



Mrs. Marie Lewis, 1st runner up, receives her bouquet from Breana Nunez



Mrs Janet Graham was 2nd runner up.

They may not go on to compete in prestigious international pageants, but those who participate in the Ms "Y" pageant do get national attention here in Belize.

And goodness do they get affection from the crowd.

The audience at the City Center on Saturday May 5 enthusiastically cheered their favorites during almost the three and a half hour long pageant which included monologues and cultural dances. There were six contestants, all deserving of the title. Who would win? Ms Determination, Ms Perseverance, Ms Vivacious, Ms Gracious, Ms Personality, Ms Courageous? How could the judges chose from among the talented senior ladies?

In the end it was Ms Personality, in real life, Mrs. Anita Henry. She was not only crowned Ms Y but also voted Miss Talent for her monologue "Poor Man's Bread." She was sashed by Mrs Jean Williams and little Keeva Wade presented her flowers. 1st Runner up was Mrs Marie Lewis, sashed by Ms Dorla Lewis and attended by flowergirl Breanna Nunez. 2nd Runner up was Mrs Janet Graham sashed by Celia Mushchamp.

Also participating were Mrs Norma Sutherland, Mrs Emily Avilez and Mrs Eileen Haylock. Congratulations to all the jewels in the Ms Y Crown.

The event is an annual fundraiser for the YMCA in Belize City.

**Comments?
Suggestions?
or want to
share your
thoughts**

Email us at

IndependentNewspaperbz@gmail.com

"A Special Place"

CAHAL PECH VILLAGE RESORT

Overlooking San Ignacio
Air-Conditioned Rooms & Thatch-Roof Cabanas
Cable TV - Private Balcony - Hammocks
Swimming Pool - Fine Dining - Conference Facility

Cahal Pech Village Resort - San Ignacio, Belize
011- 501-824-3740 ♦ cahalpech@btl.net
CahalPechVillageResort.com