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Bank to \$pank

It was reported that Ralph Fonseca had decided not to run for office in the next National Election. He has now changed his mind and will be a candidate. Interestingly Fonseca's notice of his change of mind came soon after Hugo Chavez, President of Venezuela, made a \$10 million dollar grant to the country of Belize.

Ralph Fonseca, who is campaign chairman for the PUP, hastened to Venezuela to receive the grant. He soon thereafter gave notice of his candidacy.

Chavez has been the supporter of Presidential candidates in many countries. Sometimes those he supported were elected, and at other times they were not.

Some 2 years ago, Hugo Chavez supported a candidate in Peru's national presidential election. His candidate lost and Alan Garcia was elected as President of Peru. Alan Garcia had previously been defeated as President due to corruption. However, the voters preferred Alan Garcia over Chavez's candidate who was allegedly connected with terrorist.

During the last Presidential election in Mexico, Chavez supported Andres



Is Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez bankrolling Belize's upcoming General Elections?

Manuel Lopez Obrador for the presidency. Obrador was defeated by Felipe Calderon Hinojosa, who won the presidency.

Chavez supported Daniel Ortega for President of Nicaragua. Ortega had been President of Nicaragua for 12

years by appointment under the then communist government. When democracy came to Nicaragua and elections were then held, Daniel Ortega lost.

Now with help of Chavez's backing Daniel Ortega is back in office as President of Nicaragua.

Chavez also supported Juan Evo Morales Ayma for President of Bolivia, Morales won and came into power on January 22, 2007. Morales rise to power also came from his leadership of the Coca Growers Union and his opposition to eradication of the Coca crop. He earned the label of "Narco- Trade Unionist".

In 2006 Chavez backed Rafael Correa as a presidential candidate in Ecuador. His candidate won. It has been stated that Chavez is now supporting Albert Colon in Guatemala's September presidential election.

Is Hugo Chavez, a person of questionable beliefs, now supporting the PUP for the next National Election?

Chavez recently met with Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of Iran. He pledged his support for Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Mahmoud advocates that democracy is contrary to the be (Please Turn To Page 5)



PUP campaign manager Ralph Fonseca always manages to find the funds.

Motorists get NO break on GOB taxes



Despite a 17 cent per gallon reduction in fuel acquisition prices, motorists have seen no change in prices at the pump (See story on Page 8)

Letters to the Editor

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The Italian Tourist Market

Dear Editor,

An interesting thing about the Italian tourist market is that it is a national cultural custom for all businesses not necessary to daily life, to close down for a full month of vacation for the month of August every year. Even the factories close up for the month of August. The Italians believe in their long month holiday as a national right. We used to do something similar for April and May in Belize before the government opted to match our education system to the US model and semesters. Maybe you old-timers will remember it?

Another thing that is interesting, is that we in Belize and particularly the barrier reef cayes, have enjoyed a small Italian tourist flush every August, for more than 30 years.

Something else of interest, is that 90% of the Italian population do not read, write, or understand English and actually have no desire to do so, or economic interest to bother. They being surrounded by Turks, Greeks, Al-

banians, Serbs, French, Swiss, Germans and Spanish people, one can understand the reluctance to waste one's time on learning English.

We can draw some tourist marketing conclusions from these known facts. If we wish to attract the Italian tourist market in more volume than has been historically current, then we are going to have to have our Belize Tourism Board this year, target immediately, the newspapers of major cities in Italy with advertising and also television shows in time for the August vacation rush from Italy.

If we plan to increase our Italian tourist numbers, it also makes sense that people who have web pages for Belizean resort offerings, should get translations into Italian. The statistics show that Italians will not bother to look at our English type web pages.

Waiting for direct jet flights from Milan, Italy to the new extended Belize International Airport, touted on the grapevine to start November 4th, might be misguided and too late? Additionally, if there is any government institution that deals with this sort of tourist promotion, charter flight operators out of Italy should be contacted immediately.

Or we will miss the big tourist flow opportunity for a whole year. Is anybody paying attention or studying the European tourist markets?


Signed, Ray Auxillou

Independent Reader's Letter to the Editor Gets Results! PUC – Respect the law !

Dear Editor,

Last week, I wrote the papers about the unanswered questions directed to the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) about approval for the construction of the Vaca Dam. I had not gotten any response from the PUC after two weeks.

People may recall that on May 30, 2007, Belize Electric Company Ltd.(BECOL), released a statement saying: "Belize Electric Company Limited (BECOL) has received all major approvals for construction of the

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Comments? Suggestions?

or want to share your thoughts & photos? Email us at Independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com

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GraceKennedy (Belize) Ltd.

Celebrating 25 years of Belizean enterprise

Open any kitchen cupboard in Belize and you will find us. That's because GraceKennedy Belize sales and distribution agents have spent the last quarter of a century creating a distribution network. A network so strong and wide that Belizeans don't have to go any further than their corner shop to find their favorite Grace and Colgate-Palmolive products, Teddies diapers, Suretox insecticides, Devon biscuits, and other fine lines distributed by the people at GraceKennedy Belize.

The 25th anniversary of GraceKennedy Belize coincides with the excitement of the 85th anniversary of GraceKennedy Limited, which began in Jamaica and then branched out to many different countries across the region, but make no mistake—Grace Belize is very much a Belizean company. It has been since its startup in 1982 by Roberto Espat Sr. the founder and a major shareholder of GraceKennedy Belize.

Twenty five years later, it boasts a staff of over 45 dedicated, proud Belizeans with one of the country's youngest and most energetic management teams headed by General Manager, Alberto Young.

Grace Belize ranks as the third largest distributor/exporter in the country; but in terms of customer loyalty, GraceKennedy Belize is number one. For even as Belizeans have increasingly wider selections from competing products, they continue to look to GraceKennedy Belize for the quality products they have relied on for years accepting no cheap substitution.

What's more, GraceKennedy Belize not only imports what Belizeans want and need, GraceKennedy Belize is an exporter to the Caribbean with the best Belize has to offer. In past years it has worked with cooperatives and local farmers to sell their red kidney beans, black-eyed peas, marine products and citrus concentrate to markets in Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago, and Barbados. Today it continues to work closely with the Citrus Products of Belize Ltd. to seek export markets for Belizean orange and grapefruit concentrate.

GraceKennedy Belize also has its Sno-Brite Bleach and Grace Vinegar bottled in Belize and continues to seek out producers who can package foods under the Grace label.

GraceKennedy Belize prides itself in the development of its employees and continuously seeks to establish programs that will benefit employees. GraceKennedy Belize is one of the very few companies that provides a variable salary and profit sharing scheme for its employees among other benefits like a retirement fund, training programs, medical and life insurance, and educational assistance.

Its management team is focused on motivation and continuously strives to create an environment of teamwork and camaraderie. Its family day and quarterly employee socials are special events which encourage positive attitudes and teamwork in employees at Grace Belize.

Notable Belizeans have contributed to the development of the mother company, GraceKennedy and Company Ltd. over the years. Amauri Rafael Diaz, born and raised in the Cayo district was one of GK's most influential executives, taking up an accounting post at the head office in Kingston in 1969 and rising to become the CEO of GraceKennedy & Co. Limited and Chairman of the Board until he retired in 2005.

In 1989 a reporter from the Jamaica Gleaner asked him what direction he believed the Jamaican economy should take. His reply: "What really is required is foreign exchange. My advice to Government is to focus on an export-led economy."

Mr. Gilroy Graham is another Belizean who is helping to shape GraceKennedy & Company Ltd. and also GraceKennedy Belize. Gilroy Graham joined GraceKennedy Belize in 1991 and was transferred to World Brands in Jamaica in June of 2004 where he now holds the position of General Manager.

Clearly Belizean business ingenuity has been important to GraceKennedy, both in Jamaica and Belize.

As we celebrate our 25th anniversary, GraceKennedy Belize is proud to have established itself as a leader in the distribution/export industry. Our success is due to the support of all our customers, large and small, and our commitment to them. We proudly share our company's values: "My Word is My Bond," "The Promise That is Kept," Ethics and Integrity, Respect and Consideration, Commitment and Openness.

During the month of July, GraceKennedy Belize will host several activities starting with a church service at the Open Door Church on Sunday, July 1, 2007 to be attended by all its employees, launch of a Salvation Army school feeding program, consumer specials throughout the month, samplings and other consumer activities, and a grand Customer Appreciation sale on July 14, 2007 at the GraceKennedy compound.

GraceKennedy Belize invites all Belizeans to celebrate its anniversary and thanks all its customers for allowing us to be a part of their lives, as they serve their family meals, maintain their homes and produce agricultural and marine products for the regional export market.

Grace - Great Relationships among Customers and employees



Beggars will be choosers



By: Karla Heusner Vernon

They were there at 7 am when I passed on the way to town; standing expectantly in front of their Area Rep's office. I saw more of them in front of the Prime Minister's office on Gabourel Lane when I passed there twenty minutes later. Were they at all the other officers all across the country? It was Wednesday "clinic" day after all. Nothing surprising about the gathering. Even though the numbers seemed greater than usual.

But what did surprise me was that five or six hours later when I pulled up to the building, they were still there. In fact it seemed more of them had arrived.

Those gathered were extremely agitated. They were practically pushing the single, slim police officer back against the wall.

One particularly vocal "client" began

I had to wonder what kind of woman stands in front of a politician's office from before 7 am until 2 in the afternoon, or longer, trying to get five dollars.

making nasty comments when I exited my car. I won't repeat what she said. It was racial and nasty in nature. Essentially she seemed concerned that I was somehow going to visit "her" politician and come away with something that she felt entitled to. She was visibly, and audibly, relieved when I opened the door to the post office next door instead. I looked over at her, dead in her eyes, to let her know I understood Kriol and knew exactly what she had said, did not consider it becoming, either to her or to me. She only blinked, a bit surprised. A bit ashamed, but not much. Then she resumed her tirade against the minister and his minions who had her waiting there in

the hot sun all day.

While I was conducting business next door, another woman burst in, came up to the counter and began to rail up, telling the postman how

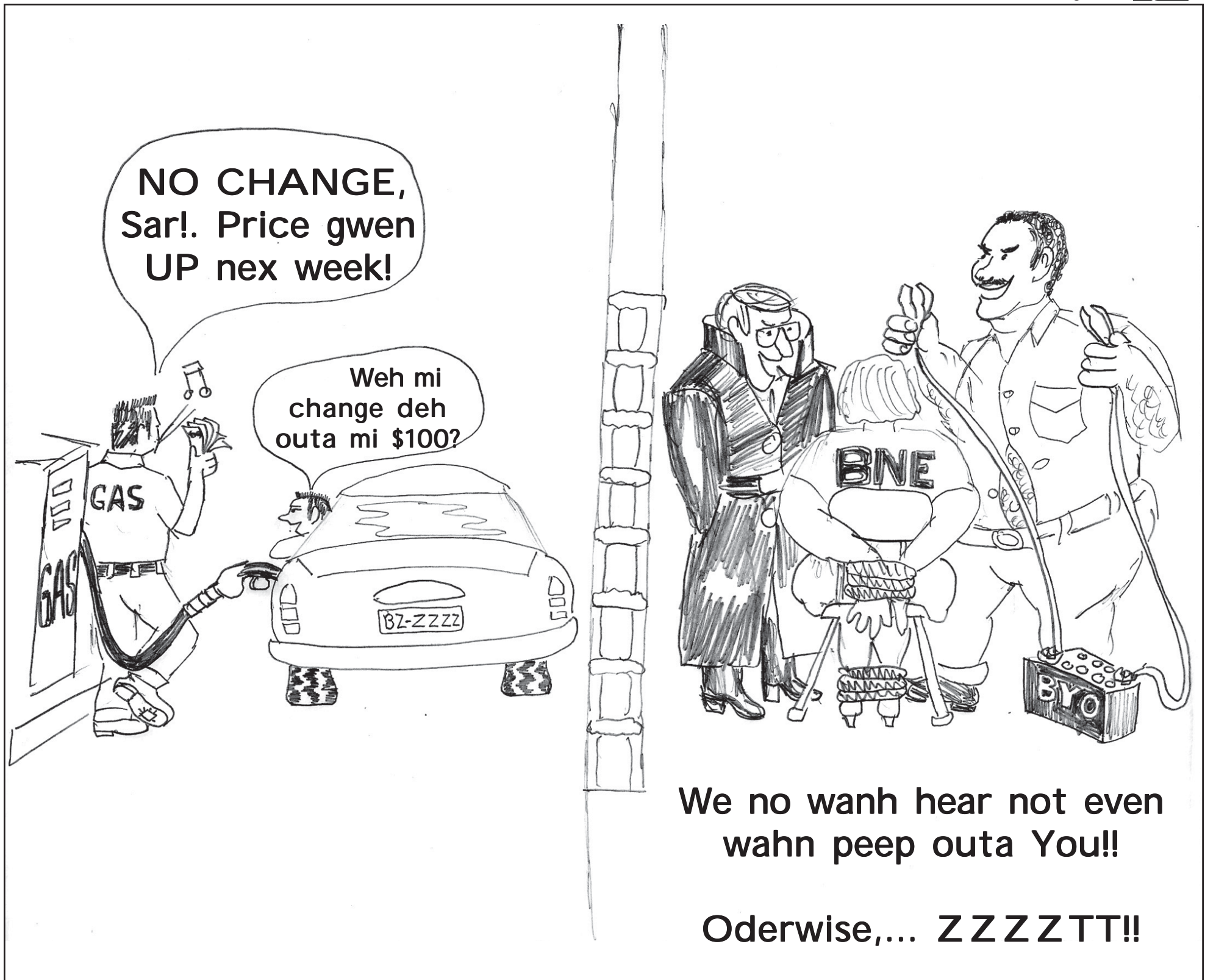
sickened she was that "they" had a woman out there all day who has seven picney fi feed and all "they" won't even give her the five dollars she came for. She claimed, in a spirit of feigned generosity, that if she had it herself she would have given it to the "poor" lady. Then she looked at both of us expectantly as if we would chip in and help this supposed friend of hers. We just looked at her, as blankly as possible (not unlike the way people watch most beggars in the streets by the main post office downtown) until she gave up and left.

I had to wonder what kind of

woman stands in front of a politician's office from before 7 am until 2 in the afternoon, or longer, trying to get five dollars. In that amount of time she could have washed and hung out someone's laundry, baked bread and sold it, or cleaned someone's home for three to four times that amount. The women of our mothers' and grandmother's generations would have done those things, done anything before publicly begging for money. There are thousands of Belizean, and immigrant women, all across this country who are punishing, but who still manage to get up every morning and think of something to do to generate some income, however meager. Women who have a healthy self-respect and sense of initiative and drive.

When I left the office I looked over at the crowd. They were getting even more hostile and crowding each other away from the door, hurling insults, trying to eliminate the competition: "Man, you done come last week, you no di get noting dis week. Why yu

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Clearance Headaches



By: Trevor Vernon

Running a small business in Belize today is the focus of the column this week. I debated the prudence of running such an article with numerous sages and they all advised against it. But it's causing me so much headache and other discomforts that I was left with no other choice really... not unlike the Registrar Issue where that office can't grant me my day in court after 2 years of inadvertently stumbling on a stolen car ring in Belize.

My first job out of Sixth Form was with a local bank. I worked at that bank for over a year before I left to pursue my first degree in accounting with private resources, read: loans. So I have a pretty good idea of how banks are run. It helps too that I have some immediate family in banking with over 50 years of banking experience all together. So I came of age discussing banking issues as a matter of course.

In a previous life I was fortunate to get a job as Finance Manager of the Chamber of Commerce, a job I was pleased to have done some pretty creative things that involve banks.

In short, I have loads of experience with banking from many angles... including meetings in Washington to explore assisting the post 9-11 USA with stemming the funding of terrorists.

Nowadays, I have a paper to run and I have to deal with big drama to cash small checks.. The other banking issues are pretty straight forward, newspaper-wise, but cashing checks and accessing funds from checks has been a nightmare. Nobody wants to negotiate them. It's getting really, really bad. You have to wait a few weeks to collect sometimes

and when you do get the check, no one wants them... not even the banks where the checks are drawn. Unless you deposit an "out-district" check and wait seven days for clearing process, you are stuck. Even if that check is from Bank X from a district branch, you can't have cash for at least a full day. And God forbid if that check is made out to the company. Forget cash for what seems like weeks.

In this day and age of technology, I can't imagine why a check drawn on Bank X from Bank X's Corozal Branch can't be cashed in any other branch of that same bank—like it is IN OTHER COUNTRIES!!!!!!! It's ridiculous, really. Don't they have internal interconnectivity? This is the day of the Internet and high speed modems for goodness sake. And I am tired of hearing, "Sorry Sir, our system is down". The frequency of this is unacceptable but what are the options? You are at their mercy and you better appreciate this.

It's easier for me to negotiate a U.S. check drawn on some obscure US or Canadian bank than to negotiate a local bank's check drawn by cash-laden, blue-chip Belizean companies. But to be fair, bank personnel try their level best to accommodate us. With a U.S. check, I get instamatic cash. No wait, no "clearing period" and "system's down, Sir". And we certainly don't get, "for this amount Sir, you have to go to the Belize City Main Office" like one bank tells us for pretty much every transaction over \$10. Instead they make you waste a half an hour looking for parking downtown, and as soon as you get to the door — guess what, they are already closed.

I used to "go to clearance" for the bank I worked for, years ago in Belize City, where all the local banks' representatives would meet at the Central Bank and physically exchange checks. That was a couple of decades ago and I dare not ask my family connections

for an update on the process to keep them out of possible repercussion from my little issue. Or maybe it's not so little. Who knows? Unless we hear from the readers, we'd never know.

I imagine that for a big business the average 5 to 10 day hold on checks due to clearance requirements would suffer additional interest charges on monies they have to use from, say, an overdraft facility. I can't afford to pay 20% interest on overdrafts or the business collapses; and, I certainly am not about to deal with the fly-by-nights affiliates with a certain Belizean bank and risk being choked at their fancy or whim. Too many small start-ups have suffered that fate, and we are not that desperate to deal with the Lord of the Flies.

I guess the only solution is to ask our clients paying for ads and such to

please send the check made out to an individual or send only certified checks or postal money orders. Or cash, which kind of defeats the whole purpose of having checks.

All I know is, it would be nice if we could speed things up a little and the banks of Belize could find some means of trusting their own branches when it comes to facilitating trade & commerce locally. Isn't it bad enough we have to deal with all these taxes and fees and penalties and utility disconnection policies and what have you, and that most of them don't want our checks? So they get to use a hell of a lot of money over a settlement/clearance period but we can't benefit from the facility. I think we need to open a bank.



Belize City, June 21, 2007.

CMA CGM now launches its weekly Maya Express Service to Belize City.

Effective June 28th 2007, CMA CGM will upgrade its Maya Express Service, linking Miami and Belize City as a newly added Port of Call.

We are pleased to offer our customers this new trade lane which will incorporate a weekly fixed-day service with sailings every Thursday from Miami and arriving in Belize City Monday evenings.

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Coincidence? Or Plan?

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liefs of Islam and Islamic law. He advocates that the democratic countries be subjugated to Islamic law. Mahmoud also advocates the extermination of Jews and Christians. Whose next?

Iran is the Country that finances the terrorist organizations Hamas and Hezbollah. Iran is a country to which Chavez pledged his support.

Hugo Chavez himself is an anomaly. He came to power against a political system that had characteristics similar to those of the present political system of Belize. Venezuela had two political parties that for forty years had alter-

nately presided over corrupt system. Venezuela, as in Belize was an example of the adage that power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Unless Belize make appropriate changes to its political system corruption will continue.

Is Ralph Fonseca or Said Musa going to give an accurate accounting for the \$10,000,000.00? Will the possession of the \$10,000,000.00 bring about an early election in August with promises of future benefits? Or will the election be delayed while portions of the money are used in projects to solicit votes for the PUP?

ADVANCED SHIPPING



Migration Is Boon, Bane for Honduras

By: Pamela Constable

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras —

Almost every day, another unmarked jet from Houston lands at the international airport in this Central American capital and disgorges a new batch of deportees from U.S. immigration custody. More than 1,800 this month. More than 13,700 since January.

The passengers file out uncertainly, pausing to grab the paper or plastic bags holding their few belongings, and enter a low building with a sign that says: "Welcome Home, Brothers." There are weary-looking older workers, scowling young men with tattoos, a handful of women. They wear clean prison uniforms or the grimy clothes in which they were caught.

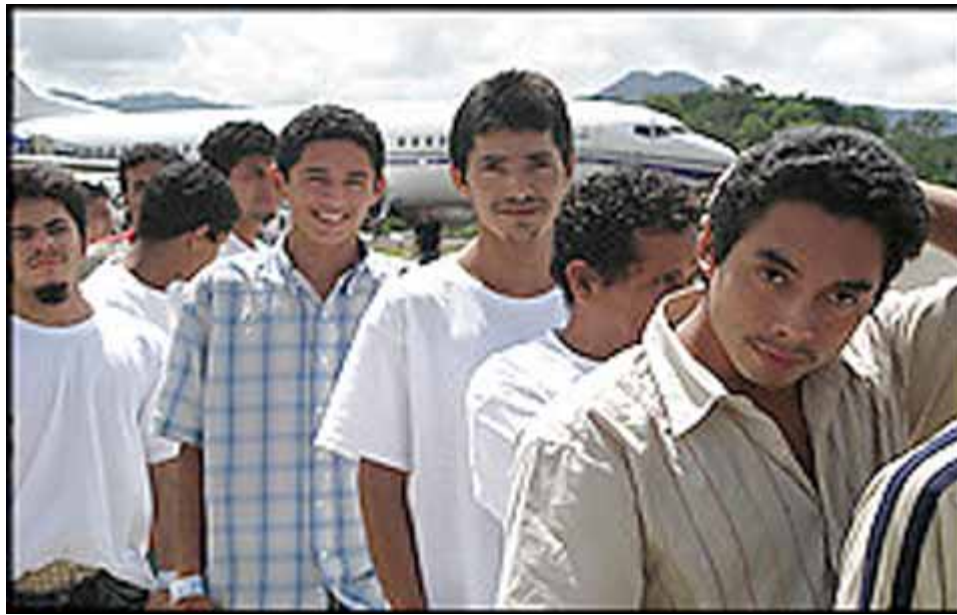
Those who found menial jobs in the United States say they sent far more money home than they could ever earn in Honduras, but most say they were caught within days of sneaking across the border and have returned with empty pockets. Two out of three say they intend to try again.

"The immigration van caught us after we walked for three days across the desert in Arizona," says Matias Miranda, 42, an illiterate farmer who just made his second attempt to enter the United States in search of work. "I was getting older and I wanted to try once more, to help my children. But already I am back without a single peso. All I got was this Bible, and I still have the one they gave me last time."

Illegal migration is a crucial safety valve for Honduras, a chronically poor country of 7.5 million where 40 percent of the populace earns less than \$3 a day and just over half the workforce has a sixth-grade education. Money sent directly to Honduran families from relatives working in the United States, both legally and illegally, provides nearly one-third of the national income — \$1.8 billion in 2005, \$2.3 billion last year.

Over the past several years, however, the pace of deportations from the United States has skyrocketed as the U.S. Border Patrol has beefed up operations. In 2005, 18,941 Hondurans were deported; in 2006, 24,643 were deported; and by mid-June 2007, the figure had exceeded 13,700. There have been similar increases in deportations from Mexico and Guatemala, which Hondurans must cross before they reach the United States.

The current debate over immigration reform in the United States, where an estimated 12 million illegal immigrants



Honduran deportees are happy to be home, yet ready to try to enter the U.S. again.

live, has caused hope and anxiety here, because it holds out both the promise of legalizing tens of thousands of Hondurans now in the United States and the threat of a harsher crackdown near the border, which about 90,000 Hondurans attempt to cross illegally each year.

Meanwhile, the steady rise in deportations is met here with a mixture of alarm and relief. Officials worry that the current flow of cash remittances to families — expected to reach a record \$2.8 billion this year — will start to lessen and that the economy will not be able to absorb a sustained influx of jobless returnees.

On the other hand, Honduran society has paid a high price for this economic antidote. Experts here say illegal immigration destroys families during long separations and lures fatherless youths to crime and gangs. It also fosters dependency on handouts from abroad and a tendency to fritter cash windfalls on luxury goods.

"Honduras today survives on remittances, but mass migration also causes enormous damage," said Julio Velásquez, an official of the Honduran National Human Rights Commission. "Those who manage to reach the U.S. can lift their families a little out of poverty, but often the families fall apart and the kids end up in gangs or on drugs. We need to create the conditions so people don't need to leave, instead of thinking of migration as something to admire."

Darío Cardona, the deputy minister of labor, said a variety of factors have contributed to the exodus. The minimum wage here is only \$3.50 a day, and many Hondurans earn far less as seasonal field hands or street vendors. Although the economy is growing and inflation is down, Cardona said, progress

has been hampered by corruption, poor public education and lack of investment.

"The poor who leave subsidize the poor who stay," he said. "Depending on other countries is a short-term help for us, but it is not a long-term solution. Our country is exporting its youth and its labor force, and after a few years many of them come back with nothing."

Sympathy and Respect

At the Center for Attention to Migrants next to Toncontin International Airport, deportees who have just been uncuffed from airplane seats are greeted with the sympathy and respect due homecoming survivors of a long ordeal. Immigration officials offer good-luck handshakes while volunteers pass around coffee, tortillas and brochures for free training in fish farming, pastry cooking, auto mechanics or computer programming.

Valdete Wilemon, a Brazilian nun who runs the center, says she has heard a thousand horror stories from returning migrants — of people crazed from thirst in the U.S. deserts, falling to their deaths from trains in Mexico, being beaten and robbed by cross-border guides.

"I see migration as a big business for those who exploit it, and a cause of great suffering for the migrants," she said. "We treat them with dignity, and we welcome them home. But this country is very poor, and the people will keep trying to get to the north, no matter how big a wall they build," she added. "The deportations are more now, but so is the flight."

Despite her ministrations, new deportees are often angry and bleak. They mill uneasily or slump in chairs, ripping open sacks containing shoelaces, belts and wallets confiscated by U.S. immigration officials — and copies of the Bible donated by prison visi-

tors — while they wait impatiently to be processed for reentry into Honduras.

Some look sullen with failure or haggard with exhaustion; others grin and whoop with defiant relief. A few young men with tattoos, possible signs of gang membership, curse at visitors. One man pulls out a snapshot of his wife and daughter, left behind when his factory was raided in New Jersey. Another complains angrily that his landscaping boss in Texas betrayed him to avoid paying his salary.

"I not criminal guy," says Santos Canales, 30, struggling to explain himself in English. "I work hard. I have wife and five kids. The boss know I am illegal. I ask for my money. He call police, not pay me."

In the next room, immigration officials call the deportees one by one for brief interviews. They answer two pages of questions that provide a basic but revealing profile of the motives and fortunes of many illegal migrants from Central America. Education level? Most say they reached only sixth grade. Occupation? Most say farmer, driver, factory worker or bricklayer.

How long did you spend in the United States? A few say several years, but most answer less than two months. How much did you earn? Most say zero; a few say between \$1,000 and \$2,000 a month. How much did you send home? Again, most say zero; some say several hundred dollars a month.

How many times have you been deported? Many say twice, some say more. Are you planning to go back? Many in their 20s and 30s answer yes; most in their 40s and 50s shake their heads and say no.

"For me, it was definitely worth it," says Hidalgo Fuentes, 30, who quit his local factory job and was caught in May trying to reach Missouri on a cargo train. "Here, the best I can earn is about \$30 a week. The last time I went north, I earned \$500 a week washing dishes, and my family was able to build a house." Asked if he expects to try again, he just smiles.

Reuniting the Family

Outside the center, a throng of families waits anxiously. Most have received calls from relatives in U.S. detention, saying they will be home this week. Gladys Morales and her two children are there, taut

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A Common CARICOM Currency includes Belize



By: **Ray Auxillou**

The old rallying cry for CARICOM to form a federation has risen again, promoted by English speaking royalists and academics who have nothing personal to risk. It's easy to play with centralization games when the only thing you have to risk is a secure government salary. But for business and trade it is a different story.

The renewal of a cry for a common currency for the CARICOM countries is once again being promoted by a writer in the TIMES. The trouble with the one currency concept is; that it is a huge step toward federation of

Caricom. The whole idea would isolate Belize over here, on our outer rim of Caricom and estrange us from our major trading partners, the Central American countries and North American.

One Central Bank, what a mess that would be! Almost all the countries of Caricom have money that is uniquely printed and only used internally inside their countries. Their money is worthless in the outside world. Local money printing is a pure control mechanism for local governments. You can't trade local Caricom countries currency on any Foreign Exchange. Nobody wants our money. It is worthless! Would it be any different under a group of worthless currencies? I doubt it! So what is the point? We might as well go back to trading Cacao beans like the Mayan Empire did. At least that would have an International currency value.

In order to establish a value for any Caricom currency, local internal politicians would have to curb their spending and borrowing habits. I can't see that happening in Jamaica, Guyana,

Dominica, Antigua, St. Kitts, St. Lucia, or Belize? Certainly there has been no sign in the past forty years that building up foreign exchange reserves is at the top of priorities for any island Caricom country, including our own. Fiscal strength, self reliance are not real buzz words for Caricom politicians. This may be because the similar parliamentary system we use, with a five year party leader appointed as dictator for five years does not fit very well into the exigencies of party politics. The demands of internal political parties short term crisis needs as we have seen for decades in Belize, outweigh those of the nation they allegedly represent. It would be worth a specialized study on the effect of parliamentary style government like ours and the end effect, on the Caricom inability to plan long term, or apply some sort of steady growth policy through savings on a regular basis in our Foreign Exchange Reserves, from which all self sufficiency must flow. You have to build a solid foundation before you can build your house, and in na-

tional governments that foundation is the amount of your Foreign Currency reserves. There must be some conflict logic tells me, why we in Belize and other Caricom countries cannot build our foundation correctly first.

None of our Caricom small country associates have shown any capability to govern financially. Grouping us together would only exacerbate the problem. A common Caricom currency, what a joke that is! Calculate, that we would separate ourselves in Belize from expansion of trade with our mainland neighbors, which is growing, and already exceeds anything Caricom has to offer, or likely to EVER offer. Pretty soon, Belize is going to have to decide to do without Caricom and look after our own interests. The expanding network of roads along the coastline of Central America and Mexico, the airline, bus and trucking freight routes, all indicate our future is here on the mainland. Maybe in the future we might consider a Central American joint currency, but a Caricom currency? No way, Jose!

Migration Is Boon, Bane for Honduras

➡ (Continued From Page 6) with excitement and dressed in new clothes for what Belkis, 13, calls "the Big Day."

They are waiting for Gladys's husband, Ramón, 34, who has been in New Orleans for three years. He worked as a house painter, sending home a steady stream of cash that helped them improve their three-room shack on a hillside outside the capital. But they missed him terribly, especially José Ramón, 9. For this family, the joy of reuniting is far more important than the loss of income.

Suddenly, there he is in the door, still wearing the paint-splattered pants he had on when U.S. immigration agents raided an apartment complex he was painting in April. The children rush for-

ward, and he crushes them to his chest.

"So you still remember me?" he murmurs affectionately. "How are you doing in school? Are you behaving yourselves?"

José Ramón clutches his father's hand all the way home, a huge grin on his face. He brags about his grades and jokingly offers to teach his father English.

When they reach their house, Ramón Morales looks around appreciatively. The back room is still a dirt-floor shed with a latrine, but the front room has new tiles, a fresh coat of paint, and a TV set and three CD players covered with doilies. Over a welcome-home meal of rice, beans and pork chops, Morales says he has no idea how he will earn a living now,

but he is sure of one thing.

"My children need me. So many homes fall apart, but we stayed united," he says. "I worked hard, I suffered a lot, I sent money home. But after going through all that, you come

back with a new mentality. I want to build a life here now. I can't leave them again. It's time for me to come home."

Pamela Constable is a writer for Washington Post Foreign Service

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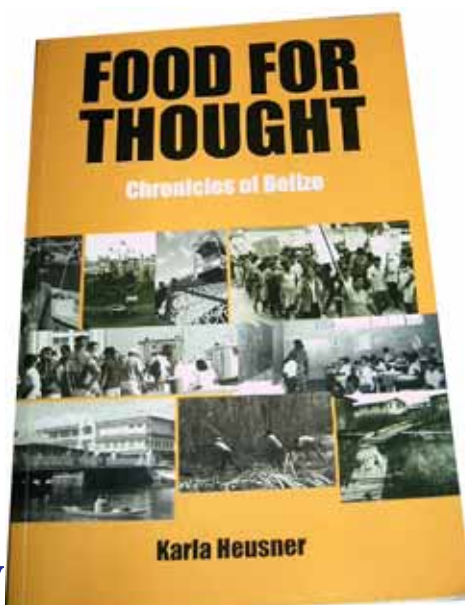
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Lynam Graduates: Your Country Needs You

By: Rudolph Bowman

For quite some time now, I have been contemplating a plan to involve selected parts of the Belizean society (local and international) with a very specific project; and I take this opportunity now to present this idea to as large an audience as possible through your written media (news-papers, internet contacts, etc).

The late great English Statesman and Prime Minister of Britain, Sir Winston Churchill, is alleged to have said **“we make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give”**. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 32nd president of the United States, and a contemporary of Churchill, remarked **“the test of our progress is not whether we add to the abundance of those who have much, but whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”** An underlying theme in both statements suggests a moral or ethical obligation to care for those less fortunate than “we” are. Our monotheistic tradition (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) is replete with such utterances of national, societal, and personal care and responsibility. Churchill’s statement, and in my opinion, the greater of the two, elicits the role of society (churches, institutions, NGOs, businesses, well-off individuals) in assisting and helping to provide for “those who have too little”.

As one who grew up under “hard times” in Belize (Dangriga specifically) and who was fortunate enough to receive assistance during my time at Lynam College, I feel I have an obligation to give back. My mother was unable to pay for my last two years which was graciously granted to me by the Rev. Urban J. Kramer, S. J. (small wonder the school folded; too many of us were unable to pay). Happy to say hard times are behind me now, and have been for quite some time. But that impetus through the Jesuits carried me on. I graduated from Zamorano, from the University of Arizona, and finally, from the University of California at Riverside where I received a Ph. D. in Soil Science. I went on to work for the USDA-Agricultural Research Service from which I recently retired.

Now it is my turn to try to give back, and I want to invite some of you to do the same. I have been fortunate enough to repay Father Kramer in some small way since we corresponded during his time as a

Chaplain in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and during his retirement at Headquarters in St. Louis before he died. I was even trying to get him to Colorado for a visit (don’t have to do that for Fr. Leo Weber; he is right here in Denver).

Now for my project plan after much ramblings: The project is called **LA-PAS**, and it is supposed to be a tribute to Fr. Kramer by all the hardworking souls he had go through Lynam (students and teachers) with special partnership with the Belizean society. **LA-PAS** (peace when spoken) is an acronym for **Lynam Alumni and Partners Association Scholarships**. I would like to see a tertiary school scholarship presented to a needy person in all seven principal towns and cities of Belize. It would go something like this based on need and some merit (scholarship):

First Year: Students and family pay. While this appears harsh, it helps to weed out those who are not really interested in school, and the initial sacrifice builds character, and gives the school a better feel for eligible candidates both financially and academically.

Second Year: Paid by Lynam Alumni Association (all who attended regardless of graduation and teachers are welcome to join). We provide enough money for 7 scholarships. My wife, daughter Jen, and I presently sponsor one registration scholarship per semester (Mary Davette Bowman Scholarship primarily for single mothers) at Stann Creek Ecumenical Junior College.

Third Year: Paid by business, industry, and individuals of means. Citrus exports \$109 million, sugar, \$100 m; banana, \$51 m; and papaya, \$31 m. Just a random sampling of the big guns. There are others out there. This is your chance to give back to your country by helping in the formation of some of the future leaders of Belize. You sponsor just 7 scholarships per year.

Fourth Year: Granted by the University or the government or both. After three years these students have proven themselves and deserve continuation. Their parents, Lynam alumni, business groups have contributed; now institutions and government are asked to do their part.

Much remains to be worked out, costs, lead personnel, etc, but this

is the framework of the plan—**LAPAS**. This means after the 3rd year (students in their fourth year), and thereafter, there will be 21 scholarships across 7 cities whose cost will be borne by the three listed groups. Each group pays for 7 only each year.

I ask that you seriously think about this, and give me feedback, suggestions, criticisms, etc. Please

pass this on as you see fit: to all the Lynam folks, businesses, and institutions, politicians, and to any who wish to take an extra active role in the continued development of our Belizean youths.

If you would like to join forces in this effort, please contact me at 719 Bonita Ave Fort Collins, CO 80526 or email bowman41@gmail.com

Motorists taken for a ride by GOB taxes

Prices have dropped but Belizean motorists are getting no relief from the Musa administration. During the past month, acquisitions costs have gone down 17 cents per gallon on premium, **47 cents**

on regular, 3 cents on kerosene and diesel, but taxes and duties have taken up the slack so that there has been no reduction in prices at the pump. See table below.

9-Jun-07				
	Super	Regular	Kerosene	Diesel
Cost of Fuel	\$5.4129	\$5.2991	\$4.8206	\$4.5988
Import Duty	\$0.4496	\$0.4496	\$0.0000	\$0.2665
RRD	\$1.7619	\$1.7967	\$0.0032	\$0.6354
Environ Tax	\$0.1040	\$0.1018	\$0.0923	\$0.0879
Freight	\$0.0700	\$0.0700	\$0.0700	\$0.0700
Additive	\$0.0019	\$0.0019	\$0.0019	\$0.0019
GST	\$0.8149	\$0.8069	\$0.5186	\$0.5911
BC Pump	\$10.00	\$9.90	\$6.35	\$7.30
5-Jul-07				
	Super	Regular	Kerosene	Diesel
Cost of Fuel	\$5.2381	\$4.8250	\$4.7898	\$4.6299
Import Duty	\$0.4496	\$0.4496	\$0.0000	\$0.2665
RRD	\$1.9402	\$2.2801	\$0.0346	\$0.6037
Environ Tax	\$0.1006	\$0.0924	\$0.0917	\$0.0885
Freight	\$0.0700	\$0.0700	\$0.0700	\$0.0700
Additive	\$0.0019	\$0.0019	\$0.0019	\$0.0019
GST	\$0.8149	\$0.8069	\$0.5186	\$0.5911
BC Pump	\$10.00	\$9.90	\$6.35	\$7.30
Difference				
	Super	Regular	Kerosene	Diesel
Cost of Fuel	(\$0.17)	(\$0.47)	(\$0.03)	\$0.03
Import Duty	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
RRD	\$0.18	\$0.48	\$0.03	(\$0.03)
Environ Tax	(\$0.00)	(\$0.01)	(\$0.00)	\$0.00
Freight	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Additive	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
GST	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
BC Pump	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00

TOPICAL TIDBITS

Northern ramblings and rumblings

What a contrast between Orange Walk and Corozal these days!

On a recent drive north it was observed that Orange Walk was decorated with banners reading "Liad Musa: Call Elections Now!" while in Corozal white and blue flags line the highway. While it is apparent the colors flying in Coro were intended for convention go-ers, the ones in Sugar City probably are for local impact since the buses headed for the PUP bash took the bypass instead. Nevertheless, both are impressive displays. And costly ones too no doubt. Election date or no, the north is ready to rumble....

Traffic Scams in San Pedro

Somebody from the Ministry of Transport needs to do a little undercover work on La Isla Bonita. Reports reaching the Independent are that taxi drivers are being shaken down for a whopping \$8,000 annual "fee" to get permission to operate. What the h-ll? Not only that, there is some official sticker now being sold to all motorists that is supposed to give them a number so they can be tracked down in case of hit and run accidents. Excuse me, but isn't that what a license plate is for? Is this legal, or is it, as widely hinted, a fundraiser for a certain political candidate's cam-

paign. Even more, residents are being told that transfers for the sale of their vehicles must be handled by an attorney, for an undisclosed fee — an attorney the traffic officer just happens to know... This is a service done at the Traffic Department everywhere else for \$5. These scam operators have got to be given a red light so they can stop this nonsense!



Pay attention to those attendants

And while we are on the subject of jacking motorists, a certain gas station on the Northern Highway has attendants who not only punch a lower amount into

the pump than the customer ordered and then keep the change, they even keep the customer's gas cap and then try to sell it back to them when they come back for it! If this happens ONE more time to someone this writer knows, the name of the attendants will be published in this paper as a warning to customers/victims. Find another job, guys, your days at the pump are numbered. (photo at left NOT of one of the perpetrators.)

MIA's on furlow?

PUP generals Mark and Cordel didn't attend the PUP convention in Corozal. We all know why, they don't have to say. Pity some of the others didn't have the cojones to join them in the boycott. But then, they were all too busy genuflecting in front of high priests, hoping their hearts don't get out during the next ritual sacrifice. What is going to happen to the ones missing in action? Maybe Disciplinary Emeritus will decide. Spare the rod, spoil the party? Can't wait to see Mark and Cordel win their divisions in spite of the spitefulness.

Registration fees stolen... again.

Excuse me, but it seems only common sense that if your school is prone to armed holdups (prone as in, it's happened before) mightn't it be a good idea to ask parents to pay their fees at a BANK and then bring the receipts to the schools? Not that hard for schools

right downtown and parents might feel a little more secure knowing their hard-earned money is actually going towards the payment of their children's fees, not somebody else's free ride. As for the schools that keep getting burglarized, maybe some of the parents need to sit up a couple nights and catch the culprits instead of letting them traumatize their kids and take their stuff.

Vegetable Stand Suggestion

And finally, would it really be asking too much for vegetable vendors to get a chalk board and write down how much a pound or price per fruit or vegetable and mount it at the front of their shop for customers? While it is kind of charming to be able to select your own produce, a lot of us are getting kind of fed up of having to ask how much for everything every single time we "go da shop" because of constant price fluctuations.

A price list, clearly displayed might also alleviate some difficulties we are experiencing with vendors who somehow charge whatever they feel YOU can pay instead of what they are charging everyone else. A small thing, but until it happens, some of us prefer to buy at Save U and Brodies where the price is clearly marked. It might seem like you pay more, but you calculate the difference the next time you pay too much for too little at an unscrupulous shop.

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US admiral puts clinics before fighters

By: Demetri Sevastopulo

When Admiral James Stavridis was a young naval officer serving on an Aegis cruiser in the Strait of Hormuz in 1987, he was faced with a very hard decision.

When an Iranian aircraft started approaching the ship, as the tactical action officer he was responsible for advising the captain whether to launch a missile.

"The aircraft was coming at us, coming at us, coming at us, and I almost launched a missile at it, but then decided not to at the last minute because I felt the ship could probably defend itself in a point engagement," explains Adm Stavridis. "It turned out to be the right decision. The aircraft went back."

"The incident comes back to me at times, because it tells you that in the world we live in, it is good to hold back on the key sometimes."

Twenty years later, his role overseeing US military operations in Latin America and the Caribbean as head of the US military's Southern Command is very different.

"In this area of the world, we are not launching Tomahawk missiles, we are launching ideas."

Adm Stavridis says the real problems in the region are poverty, inequality and corruption. He partly attributes the rise in "anti-Yanquismo" sentiment in parts of the region to poverty. He says the US needs to work harder in the marketplace for ideas, to win the hearts and minds of people in the region. He points, as an example, to the USNS Comfort, a Navy hospital ship that had just that day pulled into Belize to provide medical services to the local population.

Since assuming command last October, he has been preparing a plan to restructure Southcom to include non-military personnel to better address the non-military challenges faced in the region.

"I don't need Humvees down here, I don't need high priced fighter aircraft," says Adm Stavridis. "I need the inter-agency and I need to hook up with private-public ventures... like Operation Smile, Doctors without Borders, and the American Red Cross."

While there has been some resistance to his proposal from government agencies who are concerned about the Pentagon's ability to work as a partner, Adm Stavridis says his proposal – which he will formally make to Robert Gates, the defence secretary, later this year – has been well received.

"Over the decades ahead, this kind of interagency approach and this private-public approach is the future of US national security in Latin America, in Africa, in Pacific Command, and I would argue eventually in Central Command," says Adm Stavridis.

Unlike other regional combatant commands, Southcom is not involved in

fighting any wars. But Adm Stavridis also has some more traditional military concerns in the region, such as Venezuela. While he says people should remember that the US has traditionally enjoyed an excellent relationship with Venezuela, he also raises concerns about the country's purchase of arms, including AK-103 weapons, fighter aircraft, and reports of plans to buy submarines. "Every country has a right to buy the weapons system that it perceives that it needs, but I have difficulty understanding what is the perceived threat to Venezuela. It is certainly not from the USA," says Adm Stavridis.

But despite the arms purchases, he

says he does not perceive Venezuela as a threat, and would like to improve military relations and cooperation on counter-narcotics with the country. And while he says he does not wake up worrying about Hugo Chavez, the anti-American Venezuelan president, he says he would like to meet "Senor Chavez".

"Who knows, we might be able to talk about baseball, or something en Espanol."

Adm Stavridis will have no chance to meet Cuba's president Fidel Castro, however, because of the US embargo. Adm Stavridis concedes that there is an argument that the US would benefit from military relations with its decades-old

enemy Cuba, but says he is comfortable with the national policy.

He says his greatest concern about Cuba is the prospect of a mass migration after the death of president Fidel Castro. But while John Negroponte, then director for national intelligence, told Congress earlier this year that Mr Castro would most likely die this year, Adm Stavridis appears more cautious.

"Any 80-year old man who has had 10 gastric operations over a six-month period has got to be considered somewhat at risk," he says. "On the other hand, he is a very resilient guy, and he may be running the Boston marathon next year." --from *Financial Times*



*next election
wi
ready*

Belize

**let's
make
the
change**

This time dah fu wi country!

Teen Page



**By: Ronnier Leonardo
Corozal Community
College 1st form.**

As I walked through the enormous gate on Monday morning I was very happy for I knew I would get to know other people. I said to myself that I must learn all that I am taught. I was a bit surprised not to see anyone but then I realized I was a bit to early so I went around the campus to see all the murals on the walls.

After a while some people started to arrive. I saw a crowd of them around a paper so I went to see what it was all about I realized it was the list of students and their classes so I searched for my name and I saw I was in 1S. I was happy to see three other former classmates in my class. I had not seen any of my friends yet, but after a few minutes I saw one of them walk in. I went to see if he

was a bit nervous. He was, but then I told him that he doesn't need to worry because he can find many friends easily. I was then amazed to see so many colors of uniforms from the different schools.

After some time the buzzer rang and my home room teacher came forward and introduced herself. She then told us we needed to go to the auditorium for assem-



bly. Once there we sang our national anthem and the vice principal introduced us to our teachers, then spoke to us for a whole half an hour. After that we went back to our classes and began our first class, study skills. I got a bit bored but I still found interest in it. Next we had an English class which was a bit fun for we had to introduce ourselves. We then had

My First Day of Summer Classes



a 20 minute break. I could not believe how long the line was for you to enter the cafeteria! I thought I was not going to have enough time to buy anything. But I took chance and I cut through the line then I began imagining how long the

line will be when the year begins for this line was only first form. So I finally bought my stuff and I headed back for my mathematics class. It was very easy for all of the things they taught us was already taught in Std VI. Then after that the buzzer rang it was now time to go home.

I really liked my first day for I met some new people. I also like the summer classes because when you begin in September you are already more comfortable with the environment and with the people.

To share your experiences or ideas with other teens, email the teen page editor at jch_artist@hotmail.com.

Your weekly HOROSCOPE

ARIES (Mar. 21- April 20)

Travel will result in new romantic attractions. Sudden changes could result in estrangement's. Be aware that a female you work with may be trying to hold you back. Relatives may play an important role in your social activities. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

TAURUS (Apr. 21- may 21)

Minor accidents could occur if you don't take precautions. Make sure to arrange in advance to spend quality time together. Your self esteem will benefit. Friends will be loyal and caring. There will be hidden matters that you may find disturbing. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

GEMINI (May 22-June 21)

You can get ready to celebrate your new direction. Encourage the youngsters in your family. Everything is moving quickly, just the way you like it. The knowledge you have will enhance your reputation. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)

Seminars will provide you with knowledge and amusement. You have bent over backward trying to help them and now it's time to let them stand on their own two feet. Major moves will be emotional and not necessarily to your benefit. Do your job and don't ask for favors. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

LEO (July 23-Aug 22)

Your knowledge and good sense will help more than you think. Compromise may be necessary. Insincere gestures of friendliness may be misleading. Your bankbook will suffer and your restrictions will put a damper on your relationship. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 -Sept. 23)

You can make money but not through harebrained schemes or gambling. Relatives will not agree with the way you are dealing with your personal problems. Avoid too much discourse with colleagues this week. Instant romance could be yours if you go out with friends. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

LIBRA (Sept. 24 -Oct. 23)

Pleasure trips will be most enjoyable and should lead to new and lasting friendships. Try to spend some time on your own. Your determination may make you a little overbearing when dealing with others. Your ability to converse with charm will entice someone you may have had an interest in for some time now. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)

Don't let children or elders put demands on your time. Avoid being intimately involved with clients or colleagues. Curb or cut out that bad habit you've been meaning to do something about. You may not be happy if members of your family are not pulling their weight. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 23 -Dec. 21)

You might find it difficult to control your emotions. Put your efforts into job advancement. You may not have the same ideas when it comes to what you both enjoy. Social events will lead to a strong and stable relationship. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

CAPRICORN (Dec 22.- Jan. 20)

You need to fulfill your needs and present your talents. Don't be afraid to make additions to your house. You have the ability to motivate others. Make alternate plans just in case you need to make a career shift. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 21 -Feb. 19)

Hold on; your time will come. You may have some difficulties with someone you live with. Get friends to help you with the preparations. Don't be too quick to react. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

PISCES (Feb. 20-Mar. 20)

Don't make large purchases unless you have discussed your choices with your mate. Overindulgence will mean poor health. You can make headway in the workforce if you put your mind to it. Take your time before making personal decisions. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

Corrigendum



We apologize to our readers for a misnomer, U.S. Ambassador Dieter (left) is standing beside President of the Belize Chamber of Commerce, Emil Mena (center), and not Mike Mena, as we identified him in Vol.2 issue 25 of June 29, 2007.

Visit The Belize Zoo

The Best Little Zoo In The World

Beggars will be choosers

☞ (Continued From Page 4)
no go and give other people wan chance?" "Gyal, why yu no go home, mek yu man maintain yu picney," etc, etc.

I noticed they were decked out in up-to-the minute fashions, both the men and the women. None of them looked destitute or truly desperate. I was reminded of what I had seen—and written about-- at Area Rep offices a few years ago. Only this time, the quiet respect and politeness, almost apologetic attitude for taking up the space in the waiting room, or the man's time, was gone. Replaced by slekness, conceit, a disturbing sense of entitlement, and belief they were somehow being victimized.

I was discussing it with friends later, observing that there certainly is a need for jobs so these people can find some sense of self worth as well as income. "But they don't want to work," said one friend. "That is too much trouble. They'd rather stand up all day and beg than do something they consider demeaning. You give them a job, they last two days at the most."

Is it true? Has a whole group of young Belizeans (for most were in the 20's and 30's) somehow gotten caught up in a welfare system, joined the rent-a-crowd set, selling their services to the highest bidding candidate? Have they totally lost any sense of how to take care of themselves, focusing only on who can take care of them?

The whole scene was so disturbing so sad and such a contrast to all the Belizeans who are "out there" along the roadside every day

selling food or fixing cars or changing tires and driving taxis and teaching and sewing and working in shops and doing honest, hard work. Such a slap in the face to the thousands who get up and go to work all over this country, supporting their children, elders and themselves.

Just how big is this army of mercenary foot soldiers? And what services, besides campaigning, do they render? If there was serious unrest, would they be causing it? Or just cashing in on it?

What makes an individual choose to live off the scraps dropped by fat cats instead of trying to create their own place at the table, or at least get into something more fulfilling?

Do we judge them too harshly merely because of their crude language and ways? Are they not just the low end of the totem pole, making noise and going on bad about a few dollars a day while their more educated, savvy counterparts manage to secure themselves long term contracts or tender bids, or fancy appointments and titles with per diems and housing allowances? Is it not the same behavior, more or less, when you think about it? The same course of action Belizeans find themselves forced to take just to survive in the absence of genu-

ine opportunities for personal and national growth, decent wages and decent jobs?

At a conference in Washington, the issue of under-employment in the Caribbean was raised. But it was glossed over as one of so many problems. Drug trafficking was also mentioned and pushed aside. But I think there is a connection between the two AND between the formation of this group of political groupies. If these young people were working at something sensible, making a comfortable living, perhaps they would not be tempted to work for either the traffickers, or the traders in votes.

Just suppose that our communities had grown in the past decade instead of decayed? In my own community, Ladyville, what if a few factories or shopping malls, or ready call centers had opened here instead of this welfare office? Would these young people have matured with a very different idea of what opportunity really is? Would they have been standing outside that office this past Wednesday, planning to be there again next week. And the week after, and the week after that...

But then, maybe that is precisely why we have had no development in our community. Why the Cubel

factory went belly up and Nova shut down and Williamson is leaving and there are rumors Bowen is selling out to the Mexicans...Perhaps there are people who do not want Belizeans to be employed and stable and self-sufficient. Perhaps it is more useful to have useful fools following their leaders around, rooting around in the trash heaps, turning into scavengers satisfied with the leftovers of the killing in the world markets—intelligent young men and women who convince themselves it is somehow worthwhile to waste their entire day to get the \$5 they will just take down the road and spend on a Chinese fried chicken while their children go hungry at home, or are out following tourists around begging for a dollar.

We wail and complain about the financial losses due to corruption, but what about the human costs? Do we have any grasp of just how many Belizeans have sold out—not only their votes, but their very dignity, for a few paltry handouts?.

I realized on Wednesday that most of us have no idea how truly money-driven our elections, and our society, have become. How many of our people no longer have the will to work. Or the need to.

How many Belizeans are now tearing down, instead of building, Belize.

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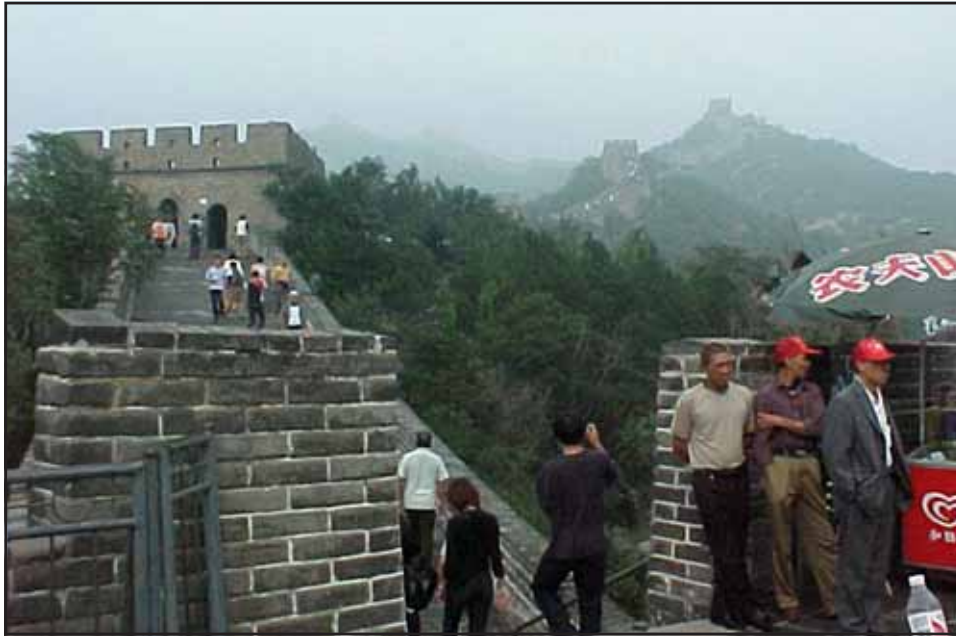
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7 new wonders of the world chosen

By: Barry Hatton

LISBON, Portugal—The Great Wall of China, Rome’s Colosseum, India’s Taj Mahal and three architectural marvels from Latin America were among the new seven wonders of the world chosen in a global poll released on Saturday. Jordan’s Petra was the seventh winner. Peru’s Machu Picchu, Brazil’s Statue of Christ Redeemer and Mexico’s Chichen Itza pyramid also made the cut. About 100 million votes were cast by the Internet and cellphone text messages, said New7Wonders, the nonprofit organization that conducted the poll. The seven beat out 14 other nominated landmarks, including the Eiffel Tower, Easter Island in the Pacific, the Statue of Liberty, the Acropolis, Russia’s Kremlin and Australia’s Sydney Opera House. The pyramids of Giza, the only surviving structures from the original seven wonders of the ancient world, were assured of retaining their status in addition to the new seven after indignant Egyptian officials said it was a disgrace they had to compete. The campaign to name new wonders was launched in 1999 by the Swiss ad-



No visit to Beijing is complete without climbing the Great Wall of China, only a few kilometers outside the city.

venturer Bernard Weber. Almost 200 nominations came in, and the list was narrowed to the 21 most-voted by the start of 2006. Organizers admit there was no foolproof way to prevent people from voting more than once for their favorite. A Peruvian in national costume held up Machu Picchu’s award to the sky and bowed to the crowd with his hands clasped, eliciting one of the biggest cheers from the audience of 50,000 people at a soccer stadium in Portugal’s capital, Lisbon. Many jeered when the Statue of Liberty was announced as one of the candidates. Portugal was widely opposed to the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Another Swiss adventurer, Bertrand Piccard, pilot of the first hot-air balloon to fly nonstop around the world, announced one of the winners—then launched into an appeal for people to combat climate change and stand up for human rights before being ushered off the stage. The Colosseum, the Great

Wall, Machu Picchu, the Taj Mahal and Petra had been among the leading candidates since January, while the Statue of Christ Redeemer received a surge in votes more recently. The Statue of Liberty and Australia’s Sydney Opera House were near the bottom of the list from the start. Also among the losing candidates were Cambodia’s Angkor, Spain’s Alhambra, Turkey’s Hagia

Sophia, Japan’s Kiyomizu Temple, Russia’s Kremlin and St. Basil’s Cathedral, Germany’s Neuschwanstein Castle, Britain’s Stonehenge and Mali’s Timbuktu. Weber’s Switzerland-based foundation aims to promote cultural diversity by supporting, preserving and restoring monuments. It relies on private donations and revenue from selling broadcasting rights. The U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, or UNESCO, keeps a list of World Heritage Sites, which now totals 851 monuments. But the agency was not involved in Weber’s project. The traditional seven wonders were concentrated in the Mediterranean and Middle East. That list was derived from lists of marvels compiled by ancient Greek observers, the best known being Antipater of Sidon, a writer in the 2nd century B.C. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon, the Statue of Zeus at Olympia, the Temple of Artemis at Ephesus, the Mausoleum of Halicarnassus, the Colossus of Rhodes and the Pharos lighthouse off Alexandria have all vanished. — On the Net: <http://www.new7wonders.com>



Visitors to Mexico’s Yucatan province won’t miss a chance to see the famous Toltec pyramid at Chichen Itza.

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Guest Gallery



Independent reader Desi Rosado sent us this photo of his visit to Bangkok, Thailand.



Belizean Pat Heusner shot this photo of Venice, Italy a few weeks ago.

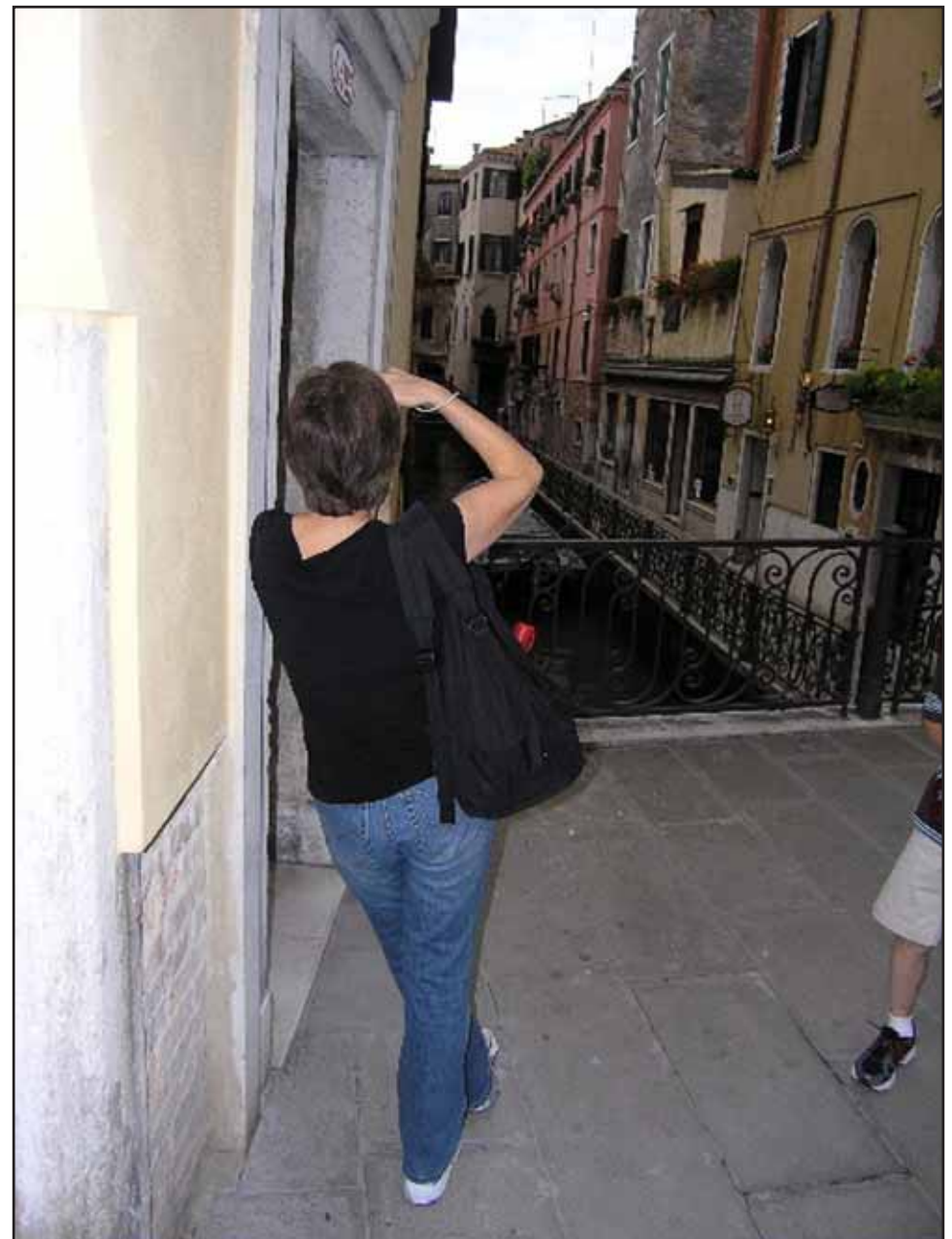


Lisa Zayden asked another tourist to photograph her in front of the Emperor's Summer home near Beijing, China.

If you have any photos you would like to share with Independent readers in our Guest Gallery, send your digital jpg or tiff images to karlavernon_belize@yahoo.com.



These colossal statues of a nude man and woman in Kingston's Emancipation Park sparked a storm of controversy when they were first erected.



Raul Cano focused his camera on his wife while she took photos of a canal in Venice

Letters to the Editor

(Continued From Page 2)
 BZ\$105 million Vaca Hydroelectric Facility and has commenced activities at the site.”

Following the letter appearing in the paper, BELPO President called the PUC who finally faxed him answers to our questions. The PUC sent a copy of an application to construct and operate the Vaca Dam from BECOL, dated 13 February 2007. According to the PUC, they decided to accept BECOL's Application and grant a license without giving people notice or an opportunity to comment.

BELPO originally wrote and faxed the PUC on June 9, 2007. The PUC granted approval for the Vaca Dam in a decision dated June 6, 2007. They said they felt the public had enough time to comment because there had been a lot of news coverage of the Vaca EIA and based on review of prior objections and comments from 2002, concerning the construction of the Chalillo Dam.

When the Vaca Dam was being discussed last year, the PUC issued a press release (9 May 2006), stating: “..in accordance with Section 51 of the Electricity Act, BECOL will have to obtain consent from the PUC for construction and operation of the Vaca Hydroelectric Project. This process has not been initiated as yet. (Ends)” This release led us to believe the PUC intended to announce receipt of any application and give time for the public to comment. Indeed, the PUC is required, under Part II, section 13(3) of the Electricity Act to provide notice to interested parties and to give an opportunity to comment before making any decision.

Section 13(4) specifies that the no-

tice “shall be published by the Commission through such medium as is likely to reach the largest number of persons in Belize...” Instead, the PUC chose to accept the Application and grant a license to Vaca — a project that will have an effect on all Belizean ratepayers, and certainly affect people living downstream of the dams on the Macal River—without notice, and without a chance for comments.

The PUC has chosen to ignore their obligation, (under section 13(3) of the Electricity Act) to publish a notice and invite comments from people with an interest in the subject of any decision. Speaking for aggrieved ratepayers and downstream residents, we call on the Commission to rescind its decision to grant consent to BECOL for the construction of the Vaca project; Belizeans, write the PUC with your concerns about this decision. Their fax number is: 227-1149 and their address is: Public Utilities Commission, 63 Regent Street, P.O. Box 300, Belize City, Belize.

How will another \$105 million (plus) dam improve our rates and how will it affect the Macal River, upon which downstream peoples and communities depend, for their water, food, and livelihoods?

Signed, Candy Gonzalez,
 Belize Institute of Environmental Law and Policy

Ban BRC bashing

Dear Editor,

Deacon Cal Cathers can very well stand up for himself. However, the person(s) who write such derogatory marks as appeared in a letter to the Times last week should at least have the

courage of their convictions to sign their name(s). They are using generalities again, making it seem that all parents of Mount Carmel School are signing, which I am sure is far from the truth. MCPS is a very large school. You are not the first to have objections to BRC being housed in the old convent, which you deem to be an historical building. Are you present when CACHE tries to work to preserve the culture, traditions and older buildings of Benque Viejo?

I don't know the circumstances of how Deacon came to use the convent-over the years he has maintained it and added to the structure. Not only that, he has provided work for many, many Benquenos, who, otherwise would have had to go much further to find a job. Presently he is the largest private employer in the town- his loss will be a great loss for the town when employees start to be laid off- what will happen to these people and their families? You might be able to afford to buy these Caribbean texts but there are many families who would not be able to do so.

You made reference to him hiring UDP friends and made special mention of

some. Not too long ago someone else accused him of hiring PUP friends. Both are correct. He hires people, perhaps friends, who have the expertise needed to carry on his specialized business, a high-tech world now.

In regard to the convent renovations, you are a bit behind - the nuns will be moving back; they certainly won't be playing golf in the back yard since that is where they are building a house for the 4 or 5 candidates who come to the parish each year. They don't come to play golf either!

Pat Asling



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“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.”**For Rent:** A (2)

bedroom flat located in King's Park, Belize City \$800/month

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3) business card –first run is free 2007, \$20 a run thereafter

4) All classified ads must be emailed to independent.newspaper.bz@gmail.com with cc to kheusner@yahoo.com and checks to PO Box 2666, Belize City. Please note:

We must receive your ad by Friday at mid-day for inclusion in following Tuesday issue.



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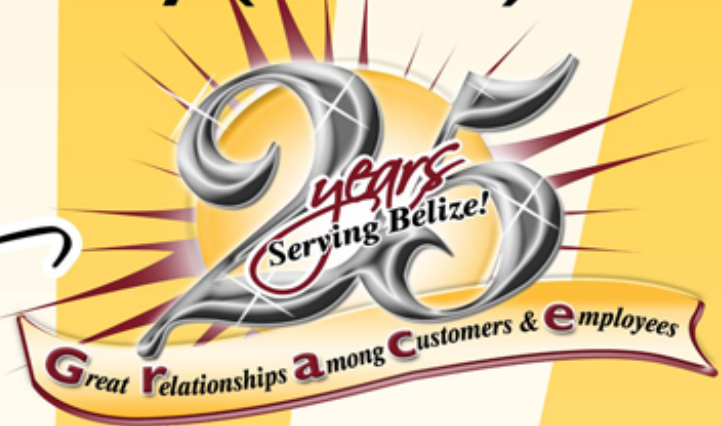
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