



The Independent



1ST POLICE YOUTH CADET CORPS DRILL COMPETITION

See page 15



Photo exhibit opens at the Mexican Embassy

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Ariel Rosado

See page 14

Referendum Rebuffed!



Audrey Matura-Shepherd - Vice President, Oceana

Thursday, February 2nd, 2012

Yesterday The Belize Coalition to Save our Natural Heritage (BC-SNH) was informed via letter that the Chief Elections Officer had rejected 8,047 signatures of the 20,160 signatures they had painstakingly collected over a period of several months last year and submitted in October. The mass rejection of 40% of the signatures means that the petition did not meet the 10% of the registered voters (approx. 17,000) which is the required threshold for triggering a referendum.

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Man murdered in Caribbean Shores

Thursday, February 2nd, 2012

BELIZE CITY - The mostly bedroom community of West Landivar in the Caribbean Shores area of Belize City was shaken this afternoon by a broad daylight murder in front of a Healthcare Partners Services, one of the nation's leading tertiary care institutions.

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Lands Department opened late past 3 weeks

BELMOPAN: The Lands Department at the Ministry of Natural Resources has been open late into the night the past few weeks. Eye witnesses say they have seen various government ministers going in and out of the building well into the late hours of the night.

On Monday night ministers Gaspar Vega, Elvin Penner, Salvador Fernandez and Ramon Witz were all spotted entering and leaving the building as late as 10:30 p.m.

Reliable reports to the newspaper at press time are that 10 UDP standard bearers have been given a total of \$1.5 million dollars in campaign finances from the Treasury through the ministries of Housing, Works and Finance.



Coye-Marin case adjourned - claimants a no-show

Tuesday, January 31st, 2012

The long drawn out case brought by the Government of Belize against former PUP ministers Joe Coye and Florencio Marin, Sr., was adjourned today when no one from the claimants' side appeared for

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Referendum Rebuffed!

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This afternoon the Election & Boundaries held a press conference where it said that it had brought in extra staff and worked through the holidays to meet the 2 month deadline for the verification of signatures. Chief Elections Officer Josephine Tomai said that it is what it is – they had followed the letter of the law and rejected petition signatures that in their opinion did not match the signatures in their binders.

The vast majority of the electorate signed their cards way back in 1997-1998 when the then UDP administration decreed a mass re-registration exercise. Tomai did not say so explicitly but it was obvious that no consideration was given to the fact that some of the signatures in their binders are 14 years old.

Tomai said she was acting in accordance with Section 2 (3) of the Referendum (Amendment) Act 2008 which reads: "Where a petition is presented to the Governor-General under the foregoing provisions of this section, the Governor General

shall forthwith refer the petition to the Chief Elections Officer for verification of the signatures of the petitioners, and for certification that at least ten percent of the registered electors in the entire country, (or if the referendum is to be held in any specific district or area of Belize, twenty-five percent of the registered electors in that district or area) have in fact appended their signatures to the petition."

Tomai said that among those rejected by their examiners, were 1,214 persons who they deemed were not registered to vote in Belize, 127 persons who had signed the petition twice, and 2 persons who had signed the petition 3 times.

For its part the Coalition said in a statement that it "remains firm in its position that the sig-

natures were collected in a transparent and open manner. The petition signatures were pre-vetted through an independent consultant researcher to ensure overall accuracy of the petition as best as possible.

"The referendum on offshore oil exploration and drilling is the people's referendum, giving all Belizeans the right to vote and decide on a critical issue that has long term generational impact. The right to vote is at the heart of democracy and should not be denied."

The Coalition had hoped to have the referendum held along with the municipal elections slated for March 7th.

The Coalition was formed in 2010 and started collecting signatures for the referendum in late 2010. It handed in the 20,000 signature petition on

December 7th, and under the Referendum Act, the Election & Boundaries Commission had two months to verify the signatures.

Prime Minister Dean Barrow had made clear on several occasions that he had no use for the non-binding referendum and fully intended to disregard its outcome, if it was unfavourable to his declared "drill, baby drill" policy.

Barrow had also argued at a press conference on Tuesday that the referendum could not be held before March 9th.

The Coalition will decide whether or not it will re-submit the petition but has noted that those who signed the petition also gave an address and the majority a phone number where they could be reached for purposes of verification.

Man murdered in Caribbean Shores

Continued from page 1

Media reports are that Mark Leslie, 38, was sitting in a van apparently waiting for his friend and driver to complete tapping the vehicle's starter with a rock, when a lone gunman opened fire on him.

Reports are that he was hit as many as six times from close range and died on the spot.

Leslie of Fabers Road, is the uncle of Marquis Mahler, an eight-year-old boy who was shot to death in July 2010 while playing in his yard.

Police sources speculate that the execution-style slaying was gang-related. At press time police had not detained anyone in connection with the brazen slaying.

Coye-Marin case adjourned – claimants a no-show

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case management.

The Attorney General presumably acting for the Ministry of Natural Resources filed suit against the former ministers for misfeasance in public office in January 2009, claiming that the men had conspired and sold land in a Caribbean Shores development below market value and deprived the Government of Belize of almost one million dollars in revenue.

The applicability of the tort was first dismissed by former Chief Justice Dr. Abdulai Conteh but appeals to the Belize Court of Appeal and the Caribbean Court of Justice in narrow decisions overturned that ruling.

Today's case management hearing was short since no one showed up to represent the Government's side.

	
Job Title:	General Manager
Location:	Belize City
Reports to:	Regional Manager - Barbados
Subordinates:	5 – Direct, 10 – Indirect and 15 Contractors
Purpose:	Overall responsibility for the management of Sol Belize Limited
Key Responsibilities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and execute annual business plans Experience in forecasting and budget planning processes Prepare and present major business proposals to higher management Accountable for P/L, Balance Sheet, Cash Flow, ROI performance of Sol Belize and for managing the Shell Brand license in country Act as senior government and key stakeholder liaison Ensure adherence to strong operating procedures to safeguard company assets and delivery of excellent customer service Implement top tier Health, Safety and Environmental (HSE) practices Ensure consistent and thorough application of company policies, procedures, across the business As leader and role model, promote an environment of inclusion, coach staff, promote learning and development Convenes and chairs management and staff meetings Ensure SOL's and Shell's corporate image and reputation are safeguarded Identify, propose and drive Sol's social investment programs Lead the application of Sol's core values across the organization and affiliated businesses within Belize Maintain a keen awareness of developments in the economic and business environment, its impact to the commercial segment and assist in developing strategies and tactics to ensure maximum business results Assist in identifying new businesses, opportunities and alliances
Qualification Requirements:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> BSc in Business Administration or relevant discipline with MBA as an advantage. Minimum 10 years of proven track record in reputable petroleum company in downstream business of which 7 years must have been at a senior management level. Demonstrated P/L and Balance Sheet accountability and results delivery
Competency Requirements/Other:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge of the Belize business and legal environment preferred. Excellent communication skills – oral and written Good knowledge of oil products business and work processes Ability to engage with stakeholders (business leaders, government officials and suppliers) Experience with related industry best practices Experience in Contract Negotiation and Execution Comply with company policies regarding but not limited to Health, Safety and Security, Personnel and Finance Proven record of delivering against stretched targets, and ability to work with diverse cultures Leadership exposure (team management, stakeholder management) Good project management skills Self-driven, with good time management skills Excellent interpersonal relationships with proven ability to manage people. Apply a keen commercial sense in all decision making Confidence in negotiating and resolving conflicts Strong knowledge of PC including word, excel and power point and internet/intranet technology Ability to communicate in second language an asset
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Application form can be downloaded from Sol website. This form along with CV should be submitted via email to: careers@solpetroleum.com and copied to: alicia.gonzalez@solpetroleum.com Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted for an interview. **Deadline for applications: 30 January, 2012**

Cop dupes ex-cop and another man with bogus gun license documents

Tuesday, January 30th, 2012

BELIZE CITY – Alwin Gonzalez has seen his fair share of trouble the law but once again he finds himself in another entanglement.

According to a police report, Alwin Gonzalez, 31, a car dealer of Guadalupe Street, Belize City, and Answorth Dawson, 36, a former cop, now a mechanic, showed up Benny's Home Center at Mile 2 ½ on the Northern Highway around 1:00pm on Friday with gun license cards to purchase 9mm pistols.

Store manager, Eduardo August grew suspicious when the men could not produce an approval letter from the Commissioner of Police which is a requirement when purchasing weapons. The police were notified and the two men were arrested and charged for uttering a false document when police could not find any records of any such licenses issued to the men.

Although charged with similar charges, the outcome was different for the men when they appeared in court on Monday. Answorth Dawson

was remanded to the Hattieville Central Prison until February 27, after his attorney, Arthur Saldivar argued unsuccessfully that the identifications which were presented to the seller was authentic and could have only been issued by the police. The identifications carried the Commissioner's signature which further establishes authenticity, Saldivar said. But that did nothing to save his client and Dawson was remanded.

Alwin Gonzalez who was represented by Anthony Sylvester and Arthur Saldivar narrowly escaped being sent to Hattieville by same Magistrate Hettie Stuart who earlier sent off Answorth Dawson. Saldivar requested that Gonzalez's case be heard by another Magistrate. The court acquiesced and the matter was sent to the courtroom of Magistrate Robert Ordonez.

The same arguments were presented to Magistrate Ordonez who agreed to granted bail to Alwin Gonzalez. Saldivar and Sylvester cited that the section of the Criminal Code which legislates what are false documents does not include gun li-



Alwin Gonzalez



Answorth Dawson

censes.

The issuing officer, Police Constable Orlando Antonio Jimenez who was arrested and charged for "forgery of an official document" was taken before Senior Magistrate, Linsbert Willis in Belmopan. No plea was taken from him due to the indictable nature of the offense and bail was set for \$5,000.00 plus one surety of the same amount. Jimenez met bail; he is to return to court on March 23, 2012.

Man grazed by bullet: "I am not scared; I don't have any problem with anyone"



Lionel Myles

Thursday, January 26th, 2012

BELIZE CITY – Belize City police neither have a suspect nor a motive for a shooting that occurred in an alley off Amara Avenue in Belize City.

Lionel Myles, 48 and four friends were playing a game of dominoes as they frequently do at the same location, around 11:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 26, 2012 when they came under fire.

Two dark complexion men came running through the alley, Myles said. One took out a weapon and just fired randomly. Myles and his friends took cover but not before Myles was grazed under the chin from the single shot that was fired from a 16 gauge shotgun, police said.

At the scene police recovered one expended 16 gauge cartridge. For Lionel Myles, his brush with death makes no sense. "I don't have any problem with anyone," he said, neither is he scared that the shooters would return to do him in. "They were just probably trigger-happy," Myles said.

The location where the men gathered to play dominoes is well known but poorly lit. Myles said that they get light from a nearby house. After he was shot, Myles walked out of the alley to the corner of King and Amara Avenue where he caught a cab which took him to the KMHM. There, his wound was stitched and he was released shortly after. Myles

said that he feels lucky to be alive.

Police are asking the public's help in bringing the perpetrator to justice. Anyone with information is asked to call 0-800-922-TIPS.

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EDITORIAL

Responsibility and duty

The newspaper has received several threatening messages from Edward Vincent Martinez, whose involvement with the Puerto Rican nationalist group FALN, was the subject of last week's headline story. We take the issue of his attempt at intimidation seriously and have so informed the relevant authorities.

The newspaper did not choose to single out Mr. Martinez' story for political reasons, as he alleges, but published it because his is an extraordinary story and his life should be of interest to his fellow citizens.

Neither he nor we can change his past. Our responsibility lies in being as accurate as we can humanly be, and to as quickly as possible correct any inaccuracies.

Our duty is to serve our fellow citizens, all of them, as best we can.

The Elections

Prime Minister Dean Barrow's announcement this Tuesday that there will be both general and municipal elections on March 7th, 2012, came as no surprise to us. It has been clear since late last year that the party in government was preparing for national elections, and it has been clear for the past several weeks that they are prepared for the contest. We wish we could say the same for the party in opposition, but it is what it is.

Let us engage for a moment in some wishful thinking, an exercise we indulge in at the start of nearly every election campaign. We wish that the parties, all of them, could agree to a more civilized campaign than all previous ones. We wish that this campaign would raise the bar, not lower it. We are dismayed by the early onset of the vandalism of signs, particularly of the PUP signs that we have seen, purportedly by UDP partisans.

We wish that by statute no political signs can be displayed before the election date is announced, and that all such signs and paraphernalia had to be removed 24 hours before the polls are open on Election Day.

We wish there would have been at least an attempt at some reform of the process. We wish that we would stop taking our democracy and the so far peaceful transfer of authority for granted, and continue to make every effort to protect, preserve, perpetuate and promote same.

And we wish that above all else, our prayers for a peaceful campaign are answered.

What are the issues in this campaign? Here at The Independent we believe that the management of the economy should be THE issue but that is only our opinion. The politicians will no doubt calculate differently, and the voters won't reveal what they think until they actually cast their ballots and those ballots are counted.

One thing we know for sure – there will be lots of promises and oodles of pledges. As the campaign progresses we will try to sort them out.

For now we know that the economy, our security, governance and the future of our nation is what we will be discussing in one fashion or the other.

Whither Mark Espat?

"The apparent fault lines that appear within the PUP could turn out to be a blessing for them as it may serve to give hope to the people on the main issue of corruption for which the last PUP government is still remembered. If the PUP campaigns heavily on a promise to do all in its power to limit corruption and nepotism and Mark Espat and Cordel Hyde are allowed key roles in the campaign to develop on this agenda, the people will likely be convinced and feel more comfortable that corruption and

LETTERS

Arrogance, Indifference or Ignorance?

Are they either arrogant, ignorant, indifferent to the problem or just don't give a damn? Those are the questions the Belize City Council raises when they authorize and continue to permit open air broadcasting, that creates unbearable loud and raucous noise in residential areas and refuse to respond to complaints.

Such broadcasts have continued to as late as 5:00 a.m. in the morning. They come out of high volume loud speakers that are turned so high their intensity, volume and heavy bass drowns out anything that could be considered music. The vibrations from the heavy bass and great volume are so great that they rattle windows as far as two blocks away from the speakers.

People are entitled to peace and quiet enjoyment in their homes. However, the rights of those residing along Newtown Barracks access road and part of Baymen Avenue have been violated. They have been deprived of such peace and quiet enjoyment. Such deprivation continues.

During such loud and raucous

emission, conversation in the home is difficult, as is watching television, and telephone calls are virtually impossible. The continuous rattling of windows is not only annoying, it prohibits sleeping and causes headaches.

Though written demands have been made the City Council continues to ignore their duty and the problem. A properly governed City should have laws limiting the amount of decibels that could be emitted and the hours within which they could be emitted. Such laws would prohibit the emission of such loud and raucous noise.

If the City has such a law and such an outrageous public nuisance is fostered and allowed to continue, then the Council is violating the law and their duty by not protecting the home owners. If such a law does exist then the Council is violating its duty by not causing such a law to be enacted and enforcing it.

The problem has existed for nearly four (4) years and it has depressed property values, remains uncontrolled and written complaints during that period have been ignored.

And they want to be re-elected?

Kenneth Gale

nepotism will be limited in a new PUP government, which will have its own internal watchdogs, and the majority of divisions will vote PUP over the UDP (17 to 14), primarily because they already perceive that the PUP is better able to raise capital and work closer with the private sector at rapidly developing the economy and creating new jobs. Most voters already believe that with more available jobs in a bustling economy there would be lower crime and improved safety and security." – facebook post

There is growing tension within the PUP due to mounting concern over PUP Standard Bearer Mark Espat's intentions. Rumors have been rife that Mark is considering stepping down and out of the race because so far, on Thursday, February 2nd, there has been no rapprochement between himself and the current PUP leadership.

Perhaps by the time you read this the matter may have been decided one way or the other.

The Belize Unity Alliance, an alliance of VIP, PNP and independent candidates, should present a slate this week. No doubt Mark would be tempted by the idea of joining the BUA, even leading the BUA, but without much by way of organization, a late start, limited time and little by way of materiel, his populist and idealist reflex will be tempered.

The PUP, on the other hand, must recognize the viability of Espat's candidacy. He is not only a three time area representative but will likely win his constituency a fourth time.

The PUP needs Mark Espat and Mark Espat needs the PUP. Can't they just get along?

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Opinions

By Rhenae Nunez



JUST SAYIN'

Little girl go home

The mother of missing high school girl Kadisha Saragosa was recently in the news lamenting the loss of her daughter who went missing one year ago on January 20, 2011. To date, Kadisha, a student of Maud Williams High School and only sixteen years old at the time of her disappearance, has not been heard from or seen and presumption is that she is dead.

The last time Kadisha was seen was around 8 o'clock when she went to a Chinese store to purchase a phone card. That day she was with a girl-friend. After purchasing the card she reportedly boarded a dollar taxi and headed to the downtown area of Belize City. Prior to purchasing the card, she was at her grandmother's and then went to visit her boyfriend.

According to the boyfriend who was never identified in the media, Kadisha received a text message around eight o'clock and left his home shortly after.

Friends at her school told her mother that they've seen a black car picking her up from school.

I have gone over the reports of this story several times in my head and I am often stomped with the issue of permissiveness that sadly too many parents exercise with their children today in Belize.

My point here is not to cause further anguish to the Saragosa family but to speak to our society that has all but lost its head. When I was growing up, I was never allowed to be out after dark and I was given a certain time by which to be home after school. My friends who I was close to were under similar rules. We were not perfect kids so we snuck out a couple times to see boyfriends and spend extra time with friends and play basketball, and other things we liked; but come dark we had better have our tails inside. My friends' parents did not allow me to stay at their homes late either, they would ask me if my mother was ok with my being there and they would call to ensure that I had permission to be out.

Boyfriends were a no-no. While I was not barred from talking to boys, I was encouraged to bring my male friends home so my mother could know who they were. Of course to avoid all that, I simply did not keep many friends of the opposite sex. The ones that persisted

I was forced to present and boy – it wasn't easy.

Although our law provides that a girl or boy sixteen can consent to sex – we seem to have run away with the idea that sixteen is the age of adulthood and we must loosen the reins at that age. I cannot wrap my mind around a girl or boy sixteen being allowed to carry on like adults who are paying their own bills. I know better than to tell anyone how to bring up their children but someone has to say something!

Our society on a whole has been lax on enforcing the rules for young people, and neither are there appropriate and adequate entertainment and recreational facilities and programs for them. Underage youths are able to enter any establishment where alcohol is sold and consumed and where adults socialize.

We no longer blink when we see young girls with older men. The authorities does not stop young people and ask what they are doing out, where they live, who are their parents, etc. I am disgusted when I see these kids in clubs carrying on like adults and sometimes worse and no one takes issue with it.

We are in such a hurry for our girls and boys to grow up – I wonder why? There is a certain time when teens become rebellious but it is not the time when we should loosen the reins because we just may be releasing our children into the hands of monsters.

There are creeps out there that are only waiting for an opportunity to pounce on young girls who seem troubled or enjoy certain freedoms or their parents appear lax. Our laws or system does not do much to protect our children and neither does it expend enough to seek after them when they fall victims. It is for parents to assert their roles in the lives of their teens and establish boundaries.

I have heard one too many stories of young people going missing and/or ending up dead or never being found again. We need to prevent this from ever happening again.

Young girls in particular must be taught to love and respect themselves more – not to rush become adults, take their time and enjoy their youth, grow and learn this world as you go along. Be stingy with themselves – it is in loving yourself and letting others know

Impartial View: Questions: Why did the Prime Minister appeal for a peaceful election?

By Marshall Nunez, Sr.

At the Prime Minister's press conference when he attempted to explain why he is calling the election early, something key was accentuated. The Prime Minister appealed to everyone to let's make this a free, fair and safe elections. As far as I'm concerned Belize is known to always have free, fare and safe elections, but it concerns me why the Prime Minister placed so much emphasis on us to ensure that this election is safe. Perhaps you can call me a conspiracy theorist or you can just say I'm paranoid but certain actions in recent past make me nervous.

Only a few days after the press conference there was act of vandalism in the Belize Rural North constituency, when people associated with the UDP were observed removing PUP flags and it almost ended up in a confrontation. The matter of violence as we have indicated numerous times was affiliated to the gang activities particularly in Belize City. The most pronounced gangs exist in the Prime Minister's Queen Square division and in the Port Loyola division. One of the fundamental characteristics of gangs is loyalty. So the Prime Minister's connection with the gangs and especially the fact that he has spent millions of dollars with the gangs under the purported gang truce can generate some loyalty to him and his party.

We cannot forget that there were allegations that some people who were working in the Queen Square division on election day was involved in the February 8th of 2008 shooting at Putt Putt Bar. On that night 14 people were shot, 2 fatally, and now there can be greater loyalty from the gangs. Also you cannot forget that at the PUP Port Loyola convention in March of 2011 it made the news when there was confrontation between some UDP supporters

and some PUP supporters. When the UDP supporters were in a yard across from the polling station and were accused of intimidating the voters. Around that same time at a PUP convention in Cayo UDP supporters were in the vicinity of the PUP convention again trying to intimidate the voters. If we are to judge by those actions there must be concerns. January 30th, 2012 the prime minister made it a major point to beg us to try and make this election safe.

Now to the elections. The reason that the prime minister has given for calling the elections one year earlier than it is expected generate more questions than answers. There are many economists who believe that it will be disastrous for Prime Minister Barrow to present a budget before election because of the number of austerity measures that will have to be put in the place as well as the major increases in tax that would have to be implemented. Of course the Prime Minister cannot admit to that or that will be deemed political suicide for his party. But is the fact that Prime Minister Barrow's government has not completed their manifesto pledge any less suicidal?

The Kendal Bridge that was washed away in June 2008 is still unfinished. The Marion Jones Stadium is still unfinished. The Civic Center is still unfinished. The massive municipal infrastructure project that would have employed hundreds of Belizeans has not even started. The Belize City south side poverty alleviation project and the south side development project that would have hired an additional few hundred people have not gotten off the ground. The 14 million dollar contract for the paving of 3 streets in Belize City will not be finished before the elections. So for a government that has all these major projects in the works and another full year remaining in the term why are they calling elections before they complete those projects in the mandated time that they have to do it?

I guess when they are on the ground they will have to answer

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how much you love yourself that others will respect you and treat you with respect.

No one seems to care enough to tell our young men and women that they are valuable to us and treat them as such therefore they lose love and respect for themselves – but every-so-often someone, one of us must get up on a soap box and preach to our children. It is no fun for me to be reporting these grizzly

stories of young girls being exploited by grown *\$\$ men who should know better and who have daughters the same ages of the children they prey on. It is no fun reporting about a young man who has his whole life ahead of him that has been cut short. There was a time in the not-too-distant past when our society observed certain standards...there is no need to abandon them.

BLUE NOTES:

How do we vote? Party, Policy, Person or ...

About two years after the 2008 general elections a distinguished political analyst and also one who himself had participated in the electoral contest sent a letter to the press divulging how he voted in the 2008 elections. He said he believed that many other people had made the same mistake like him. He went into the ballot box and voted against the PUP and never did stop to think what he was voting for. He confessed to making that mistake and he believed many others felt the same.

If elections are to be a means of popular control over public policy, voters must be reasonably well informed about policy issues and must hold opinions about them. Yet large numbers of the electorate are politically uninformed, have no real opinions on policy issues, and therefore respond inconsistently to policy questions as evidenced by the above confession to the press.

We are not yet in the post-party era however disillusioned people may be about party politics. Traditional political science asserted that parties were necessary instruments of popular control of government. Responsible parties were supposed to: a) Develop and clarify alternative policy positions for the voters. b) Educate the people about the issues and simplify choices for them. c) Recruit candidates for public office who agreed with party policy positions. d) Organize and direct their candidates' campaigns to win office. e) Hold their elected officials responsible for enacting party policy positions after they are elected. f) Organize legislatures to ensure party

control of policy making.

Thirty-three days from today we go to the polls. As an electorate are we reasonably politically informed on the alternative policy issues of the competing political parties and independent candidates and, of course, the character, technical competence, and integrity of the men and women who are expected to effect these policy positions? While it is incumbent on us to get ourselves informed we must hear from the political aspirants. What have we been hearing? - Superbond, corruption, bloated contracts, imagine the possibilities, 1.2 million giveaway of hams and turkeys, seventy plus million dollar giveaway of houses, indecent haste in land distribution, suspicious mass naturalization, allegations of registration fraud, and yes the list goes on.

These criticisms, if constructive, should be voiced with no exaggeration and distortion and should be taken into account in the decision-making but must not be left to stand alone. But where are the alternative policy positions to maximize on the use of our resources, to create the environment for sustainable growth and the consequential benefits of poverty alleviation and crime reduction? Where are the alternative policies for an investor-friendly tax system? Where are the alternative policies for universal access to primary health care and quality education? Where are the policies to restore confidence in the enforcement and judicial system?

What our political aspirants are engaged in are the blame-game and rear-view mirror mental exercises. If we choose to vote, we are being forced to

choose between the lesser of two evils and not the better of two good. We need to know the policy positions of the political parties and the independents so we can better assess and evaluate both their past and expected performance and possibilities. The PUP came to office in 1998 with well thought-out policies which must have contributed to such a large mandate. Policies which no doubt by any professional judgment, were commendable. The UDP came to office in 2008 with a large mandate not because of its policy positions but because of the fiscal recklessness of the PUP in effecting its meritorious policies. To the credit of the PUP it is the only govern-

ment so far that right its wrongs while in government and home-brewed a policy framework that was and still is capable of restoring the country's fiscal and financial sustainability.

One was excellent in the propaganda of stigmatizing the other and won. The other because of its transgressions had lost the moral authority to lead and its restorative policies were lost in the noise of the propaganda, and so it lost.

We must now understand why that voter in his confession to the press made that mistake. For our country's sake, let us not repeat it.

If properly informed, we can vote party, policy, and person all in one.

Impartial View:

Continued from page 5

those questions and maybe the voters will judge them based on their unfinished business. With just over 30 days to the elections another question in the streets is whether the PUP is ready to take over the government. The vibes on the street is that people are very dissatisfied with the UDP performance but their perception of the PUP is becoming a concern. Independent voters are asking when the PUP campaign is going to get into gear. The PUP has indicated that they don't have the kind of resources to put off as

robust a campaign as the UDP can. But will they have enough to be viable enough and to impress the electorate? And if they do when will the Blue Machine get into gear? Of course there is still the concern about the PUP's unity. But the man on the street appears to want to rally behind the PUP but they want to see the PUP in full effect.

Judgment day will be March 7th but those undecided voters will be observing for the next 30 days and they will make their decision then.

Just my Impartial View.

Alberto Vellos Dorla Vaughan Gary Ayuso Patrick Thompson Swamy Babani

SOLUTIONS
not promises

FORWARD
with TEAM 11

Robert 'Bobby' Cadle Edward Young Erwin X Lennox 'DJ Tambran' Young Peter Lacey, Jr.

Karen Bodden
for Mayor

VOTE
PUP

FINANCIAL SENSE

It is never too early to plan for the future financially



Mrs. Judy McCutcheon is currently doing her International Masters in Business Administration at the University of the West Indies; she is also in the final stages on completing her CGA (Certified General Accountant)

While in Belize Mrs. McCutcheon worked as a Financial Accountant for a large corporation and also as an Advisor. She believes that we are all responsible for our own financial wellbeing and that we should do all in our power to ensure that our financial future is secure.

retirement is a long way off, but the truth is unless we die young, we will grow old and growing is much better than the alternative; so why not prepare to enjoy those years in comfort. We may think that the present economic conditions won't allow us to think beyond the present, but it is crucial that we do. In spite of the challenges we face, we can carve a path towards our life styles, our life income, and our financial protection (Insurance). I am of the opinion that the better people understand their financial situation, the more resilient they become.

It is never too late to start saving towards retirement, of course, the longer you wait, the more aggres-

sive you will have to save – but the most important thing is taking action now to improve your situation. The younger generation should take a closer look at the challenges now being faced by the older generation and learn from it, so that they don't repeat the same mistakes.

Some points to consider:

- Life styles: - Live within your means and think about the life style you want during retirement.

- Life Income (Pension): - Take a closer look at your retirement benefits and take steps to ensure that there will be income to sustain you during your retirement years

- Income Protection (Insurance):- Protect your current assets; insure yourself against current and future financial risk.

In the end remember it is all up to you to create and protect your financial future, take action now. If you need help understanding life income and income protection contact a financial advisor and get the help you deserve.

Do you have a topic that you would like covered, you can contact me at: mccutcheon_judy@yahoo.com

By Judy M. McCutcheon

We all want to be remembered for something positive; we all want to leave some sort of legacy behind. Have you thought about your financial position in the next ten, twenty or even thirty years after retirement? We are all responsible for creating and protecting our own financial wellbeing. With the current financial crisis, persons approaching retirement are faced with a rapidly changing retirement landscape. People are now living thirty years after the normal retirement age of sixty five; they are also encountering more challenges than any other generation.

There is great uncertainty about the viability of the social security program to maintain itself. Many companies have either no traditional pensions or those that do have, have severely reduced such plans and expect employees to contribute much more. There is also a decrease in savings and skyrocketing health care.

In the case of Belize some large companies claim to have a pension fund, but that plan is nothing but a savings plan. What happens with this is that employees contribute a percentage of their salary and this amount is matched by the employer. What the employer then does is to place this money into an interest bearing account at one of the commercial banks and when an employee retires, they are handed a "big fat" cheque to go home with, and because no one has bothered to teach you about money management and financial planning, what do you think happens with that money? It's finished before you can say "Swiss family Robinson" and you are left in the cold to fend for yourself at age 70.

The time to think about retirement is when you get your very first pay cheque. Young persons in their early 20's and 30's may think that

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State Of The Arts:

LA LUNA, LAS SANDIAS Y ELLAS



By Katie Usher

As I walk up towards the two-story house, I am surrounded by flowers, brightly coloured Mexican pottery, and wind chimes, made from various types of materials, which sang and clinked in the morning breeze. I knocked on the door of Araceli Hunter-Krohn's home to ask her about her new work and art exhibit.

Lita, as she is more affectionately called, is currently preparing for her new exhibit *La Luna, Las Sandias y Ellas* (The moon, watermelons and they [women]). I love that she used a Spanish title for the exhibit to highlight her Costa Rican heritage. We sat around the table in her sunny upstairs Belize City home while she showed me invitations from her past exhibits. We also browsed through several *In-transits* where her art was featured. One of the *In-transits* we looked at shared views which I believe are very representative of her character both as a woman and as an artist.

"The exhibition of paintings by those 'Triple Trouble' women artists is titled THREE and it bucks the system big time. More than one system, too. The systems those fearless women buck are: (1) social, (2) gender, (3) cultural, and (4) moral."

These were words used by Andrew Steinhauer to describe the exhibit *Three* in which Lita participated with Sandra March and Jeanne Bennett in September 2003.

Reading this, I was instantly transported back to the first time I met Mrs. Krohn. As a General Studies



SOME PAINTINGS BY: LHK 'Lita' on

Sat. February 4th, 2012
THE SECRET GARDEN
5 p.m. - 8 p.m.
Drinks & Snacks
on sale

student at SJC/C students are required to complete at least 8 credit hours of History. I decided to take Belizean History with Lita Krohn. She entered the classroom briskly, set her brightly coloured handbag on the desk and introduced herself. "My name is Lita Krohn and I would like to begin by saying that History is His Story."

Right away I knew that I would be seeing Belizean history in an entirely new light and not through the eyes of the 'big boys' club' as he referred to it. And this

was surely the case, Lita always tried to show us history through various sets of eyes. She especially enjoyed showing us history with perspectives which were not widely discussed for example: the Mayan and Garifuna perspectives of Belizean History. She never discredited any popular, more accepted versions of our history, but she always tried to make us realize that there were other sides to every story and that we must hear most, and if possible all, before coming to any conclusions.



The artist at work



Paintings in house

sign, Print Making and Art History.

I could see elements of these disciplines as I sat in her home. The walls of her home are garnished with paintings from Pen Cayetano, Manolo Daza, and Omar Sanchez just to name a few. On her coffee table are countless books and magazines on art and history along with Belizean classics like *Bruck-down*. Seated on a small table, beside a stairway that leads to the first floor of her house, were some slender, armless, wooden angels with punched-tin wings, which are typical finds in traditional Mexican souvenir shops. Right behind these were two small baskets filled with old glass bottles, most possibly retrieved from the Belize City coastline. She had once told us a joke in class that the country was built on wood chips and glass bottles, a legacy from the Baymen. Even the Costa Rican delicacy Gallo Pinto recipe, a tiny painting of a rooster and a huge plate of rice and beans, was mounted like a Picasso in her kitchen.

These kinds of cultural fusions are typical to Lita, as she mixes Belizean, Latin other cultural elements in her paintings. She would, for example, paint a Botero-esque woman reclining on a sofa, reading *Belize Times* and an *Amandala* with long red manicured nails.

Everyone who has ever seen Lita's paintings knows that there are certain recurring themes, for example, women and their lovemaking or relationships and watermelons. I finally had to ask Krohn, to explain her fascination with this fruit. She said that she had once met the ambassador from El Salvador, who described the then leader of government, at the time of the massacre in the Cathedral, as a watermelon: green on the outside but a communist at heart. She says that she can identify with being a communist at heart.

La Luna, Las Sandias y Ellas promises more paintings of romance, femininity and the subtle revolution. The exhibit opens on February 4, 2012 at the Secret Garden in Placencia. The exhibit is open to the public and food and drinks will be on sale. The exhibit will be on display at the Secret Garden for one month.



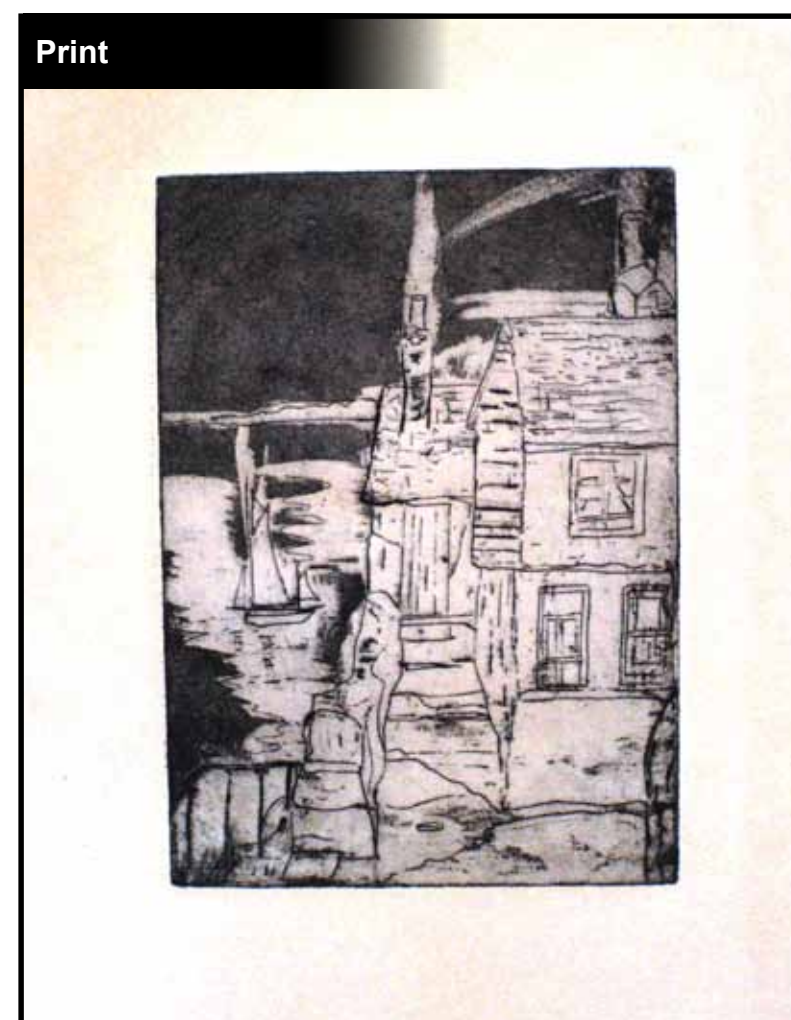
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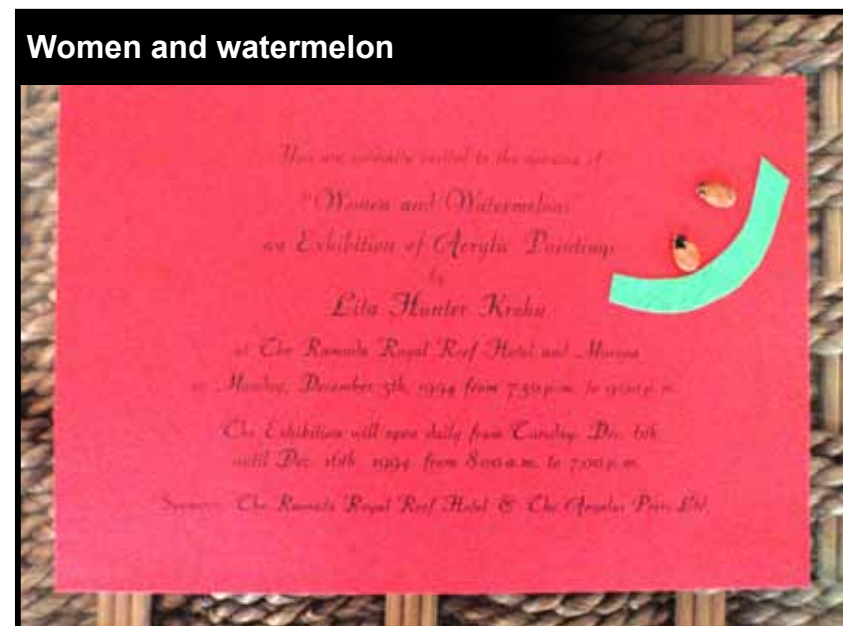
Print



Print



Sandia



Women and watermelon

Caribbean News:

Trinidad's Warner launches national petition to resume hangings

Wednesday, February 1, 2012

TRINIDAD WORKS Minister Jack Warner yesterday launched a death penalty campaign that will see his supporters in every part of the country collecting signatures for a petition calling for the enforcement of hanging.

The petition will be laid in Parliament and given to Prime Minister Kamla Persad-Bissessar and Opposition Leader Dr Keith Rowley, Warner said.

Warner launched his "A Fisherman's Cry" petition at his Chaguanas West constituency office. He was flanked by vice-chairman of the Congress of the People Vernon

De Lima and Deputy Chaguanas Mayor Gopaul Boodan.

The theme, he said, was chosen in light of the murders of three fishermen last month, two of whom lived in his constituency and the third in Longdenville where Warner grew up.

Rapundai Ramsaran, the mother of two of the murdered fishermen, also attended the launch. She broke down in tears, saying she wanted justice and called for her sons' killers to be executed.

Warner said the citizens were being "slaughtered by a handful of ruthless deviants and misfits who refuse to work for an honest dollar but choose to make criminal enter-

prise their career".

He said the law as it existed "is making a mockery of the law".

"That is the effect of the situation where the law books prescribe a lawful punishment for a crime, but it is a punishment that cannot be carried out against the offender. The result is that the criminals are laughing at the justice system. They know that they have cheated and beaten the hangman, even before they can be caught and convicted," he said.

Warner said when criminals beat the system, they were heroes in their gangs, and in the last ten years, 3,500 citizens have been killed. He said, "A check of the prison reveals that almost every single one of the less than one per cent of murderers apprehended and convicted has escaped the prescribed lawful punishment by exploiting gaping holes in the law."

Warner said the Constitutional (Amendment) (Capital Offences) Bill was brought to Parliament last year but defeated after the People's National Movement (PNM) voted

against the legislation.

Warner said over the next six weeks, volunteers will go to all 41 constituencies seeking signatures to the petition. He also said thousands of jerseys would be distributed.

Warner also urged supporters to write letters to the editors of various newspapers and call into radio and television programmes.

The petition calls upon every Member of Parliament to "get serious with fixing the laws concerning the enforcement of the death penalty, including addressing the issue of lengthy delays with petitions to the human rights bodies".

De Lima said the country should suspend its dealings with human rights bodies for five years in order to enforce the death penalty.

"The law-abiding citizens are not carrying out the death penalty, but the criminals are. And when the criminals come to your homes, there is no mercy. There is no (human rights) petition," said De Lima.

"What is taking place in Trinidad and Tobago today with these murderers is war. And we have to come out and fight these criminals like is war. You cannot let them feel that they can master you," he said.

Mexico police take refuge from Juarez drug gangs

Wednesday, February 1, 2012

MEXICO: Some 2,000 police are hunkering down in hotels in Mexico's most violent city of Ciudad Juarez after a drug gang threatened to kill an officer per day if their chief refused to resign.

Eleven police officers, including four commanders, have already been killed in the city across from El Paso, Texas, since the start of the year.

The city's mayor this week ordered police to use several local hotels as temporary barracks to protect themselves from attacks on the way home from work in the city at the heart of Mexican drug violence that has left 50,000 dead in five years.

Mayor Hector Murguía said Tuesday that they would stay in hotels for at least three months, with 1.5 million dollars put aside to pay for it.

Murguía stood by his police chief, Julian Leyzaola, a controversial former soldier who has also been asked to resign by human rights groups for his alleged heavy-handed policing.

"The chances that he (Leyzaola) resigns or that

they force him to resign are zero percent," the mayor told journalists.

At the entrance to the Rio motel, on Las Torres avenue, several patrols stand guard to protect access to the improvised barracks, as others monitor vehicles passing by.

Last week, several banners signed by the "New Cartel of Juarez" appeared around the city of 1.3 million, to announce the killing of a police officer each day as long as Leyzaola stayed in charge of the local police.

Some of the messages also accused the police chief of protecting another group, "New Generation," allied to powerful Sinaloa drug cartel of fugitive billionaire Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman.

According to the mayor, the threats only showed how concerned the drug gangs were in the face of Leyzaola.

Murders fell to less than 2,000 in the city in 2011 -- the year Leyzaola took control -- from 3,100 in 2010. Key leaders of city gangs like the "Aztecas" were also captured.

Leyzaola already provoked controversy when he led police in another Mexican border city, Tijuana in

northwest Mexico.

Authorities lauded him for reducing crime there but organizations such as Amnesty International sought to put him on trial for the alleged torture of prisoners, backed by witness accounts from at least 25 police.

Since Leyzaola took over the local police in Ciudad Juarez in March 2011, the Chihuahua state human rights commission has recorded 37 complaints against him, including for abuse of authority and arbitrary detentions.

Gustavo de la Rosa, a commission member, told AFP that the police "were told to arrest anyone who looked like a criminal or became nervous on seeing someone in uniform."

The business community of Ciudad Juarez -- the base of almost 20 percent of Mexico's manufacturing industry -- support the police chief, however.

"It's clear that we have to stop the violence continuing, particularly murders of police. We have to look for means to reinforce the local police," said Alejandro Seade, director of the city's chamber of commerce.

Venezuela's oil exports to US decline

Thursday, February 2, 2012

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — Venezuela's oil exports to the United States have dipped in recent months to their lowest level in nearly nine years, according to new U.S. government figures, reflecting a long-term trend of declining oil shipments during President Hugo Chavez's 13-year-old government.

The U.S. imported 764,000 barrels per day of Venezuelan crude oil and refined products such as gasoline in November, the last month for which figures are available, according to U.S. Energy Information Administration figures released this week.

That was the lowest monthly amount since February 2003, when 613,000 barrels a day were imported at the end of an oil industry strike that hobbled Venezuela's economy.

The United States remains the top market for Venezuelan oil, but Chavez has been diversifying his country's clientele by selling more to China and to allies in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Fluctuations in oil shipments are normal month-by-month, but the latest figures also show that U.S. imports from Venezuela declined during the first 11 months of 2011 to an average of 952,000 a barrels a day, down from 988,000 barrels a day during 2010. It's a marked change from the nearly 1.5 million barrels a day that Venezuela sent to the U.S. market in 1999, when Chavez took office.

Alberto Quiros, a Venezuelan oil expert and former Shell executive, said the drop is due in part to increasing sales to China and other countries by state-run Petroleos de Venezuela SA, or PDVSA. He said maintenance troubles also have diminished output from refineries.

"I think the problem PDVSA has is that it lacks sup-

Continued on page 11

"Picture This: Our Diverse Reality" photo exhibit opens at the Mexican Embassy



Belmopan, Belize, 2 February 2012.- Today the Mexican Embassy hosted the opening of the exhibition "Picture This: Our Diverse Reality", which shares the perspectives of persons with diverse abilities through photographs they have taken about what is important to them.

The exhibition is coordinated by Sharon Craig and Kent Young, in collaboration with the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, the Belize Assembly for Persons with Diverse Abilities, Care Belize, St. Francis Xavier University of Canada and the Mexican Embassy.

In the last years, Mexico has provided special attention to the policies related to persons with diverse abilities both at the domestic and the international level. On September 2001, Mexico proposed to the United Nations to discuss an international convention to protect persons with disabilities at the World Conference against racism in Durban, South Africa. After being approved and ratified by different countries, finally on May 3rd, 2008 the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities came into force. Additionally, Mexico has continued participating in different regional and international organizations promoting the protection of persons with diverse abilities.

At the domestic level, Mexico established in 2003 the Anti-discrimination Council, led by Mr. Gilberto Rincon-Gallardo, a national

and international leader of persons with disabilities and a political activist in Mexico. Mexico has also enhanced the development of different initiatives and public-private projects to expand the protection and the appropriate services to persons with diverse abilities, such as the Teleton project which has established different Child Rehabilitation Centers across Mexico for children with disabilities.

More recently, the Mexican Government conducted a National Survey on Disabilities (ENADIS) in order to assess the state of the protection of the population with diverse abilities and to guide the implementation of policies in this area. For all those reasons, the Mexican Embassy welcomed the exhibition "Picture This: Our Diverse Reality" in order to contribute to the efforts in Belize towards the strengthening of the protection of persons with diverse abilities.

The exhibition will remain open until February 10th, 2012. The entrance is free and open to the general public, Monday to Friday, from 8:30 am to 5 pm.

For more information, please contact the Institute of Mexico in Belize at 223-1408 or write to consular@embamex.bz. Visit the Mexican Embassy's website: www.sre.gob.mx/belize or Facebook: www.facebook.com/EmbassyofMexicoinBelize

Twocanview – a Belizean American blog debuts

Twocanview is a daily blog by two Belizean women living in the United States that is fast becoming a popular read.

Aria Lightfoot and Fayemarie Anderson Carter met in 1991 while attending St. John's College Sixth Form in Belize City. They were often pitted against each other by their English teacher, who would put them on opposing sides for the purpose of debating current issues. For some 20 years, the two had not been in contact. They both, unbeknownst to each other, emigrated to the United States, attended college, got married and now have families. It may have remained this way, had it not been for the chance run in on Facebook.

They saw each other responding to political debates, sometimes agreeing, sometimes disagreeing and sometimes, chastising each other, just like old times. Aria soon decided she wanted to take on these issues in a more neutral arena, one not coloured by party loyalty and agendas. So, she approached her old debate "nemesis" with the idea of creating a blog to do just that. Together, they try every-

day to encourage open and frank discussion in an effort to inspire change.

Aria tackles the issues of the moment, writing hard hitting articles addressing concerns and criticisms of both the present government and the opposition. Fayemarie writes satire using birds to represent the different sectors of Belizean society in a column called "the Aviary", similarly addressing these issues but in a less direct way, often using Creole expressions and vernacular of the true Belizean. Fayemarie also writes a daily commentary called the "Daily Dingleberry" to draw attention to the various obstacles Belizeans face as we fight for change and progress.

Their goal is to lift the sense of helplessness and hopelessness crippling our people and replace it with determination, pride and a feeling of ownership. This is our country and we have every right to determine the course of its future.

For more information and how to follow them visit www.twocanview.com or www.facebook.com/Twocanview.

Venezuela's oil exports to US decline

Continued from page 10

ply," Quiros said. "Shipments to the United States have decreased, and the number of purchases from third parties has increased to be able to comply with commitments."

The U.S. government figures also show a sharp drop in the amounts of refined oil products arriving from Venezuela, from 288,000 barrels a day in 2005 to 79,000 barrels a day in the first 11 months of 2011.

Venezuelan Oil Minister Rafael Ramirez said last year that the country intends to keep shipping current amounts of oil to the United States. "We have long-term contracts and we comply with them strictly," Ramirez said.

Venezuelan officials did not immediately comment on the latest U.S. statistics, which were posted on the Energy Information Administration's website this week and reported by Venezuelan newspapers on Wednesday.

Gustavo Coronel, an energy consultant and former executive of PDVSA, said "the impact of this decline on the U.S. market is small. It is easily compensated by Saudi Arabia, Canada and other suppliers."

But he said Venezuela's government is taking a financial hit because officials "are not selling their dwindling volumes of oil at commercial prices." Coronel noted that about 300,000 barrels a day are sold to Caribbean countries under preferential credit terms that mean less cash flowing into Venezuela's coffers.

Coronel and other critics also note that rising domestic demand for heavily subsidized gasoline, which sells for as little as 6 cents a gallon (1.6 cents a liter), cuts into the amount of fuel that can be sold internationally at market prices.

Venezuela has set a goal of more than doubling shipments to China, which has in turn provided billions of dollars in loans-for-oil deals. Ramirez has said Venezuela is shipping China more than 400,000 barrels of crude a day.

Chavez, meanwhile, has announced plans to increase oil output, saying in a speech to lawmakers last month that Venezuela is producing 3 million barrels a day and plans to raise that soon to 3.5 million barrels.

Many analysts say Venezuela is actually producing far less than the government claims. OPEC has estimated Venezuela's oil production recently at 2.4 million barrels a day.

"Since production hasn't increased but rather has decreased a little, that oil has to come from somewhere," Quiros said. "Diversification of markets is a sensible strategy. That bad thing is when that diversification (comes) at the cost of the more profitable market."

Chavez has denied that Venezuela is losing financially through its oil deals with China and Caribbean countries, saying the country is on a better financial footing as a result of diversifying.

Quiros said the recent announcement that the huge Hovensa refinery in the U.S. Virgin Islands will close this month seems linked to a lack of crude shipments from Venezuela. Much of the oil processed at the refinery has traditionally come from Venezuela, and Hovensa is a joint venture of U.S.-based Hess Corp. and PDVSA.

Hovensa said it was closing because losses have totaled \$1.3 billion over the past three years. The shutdown is also part of a larger trend across the U.S. of refineries closing due to the economic crisis and shifting markets.

Jorge Pinon, a research fellow at the University of Texas' Center for International Energy and Environmental Policy, said shutting down the Hovensa refinery "was a sensible economic decision."

"The refinery was losing money for a number of reasons and it was financially beneficial to both partners shutting it down," Pinon said.



SAN PEDRO BEAT

(The Independent is happy to debut a new feature "San Pedro Beat" which will provide a weekly synopsis of the going-ons in La Isla Bonita. Readers should also note that The Independent is available for sale at the following newsstands: Ritchie's Supermarket, Caye Mart, SuperBuy, Island Supermarket, Lourdes Store, Rock's Center, Public's Grocery, Marina's Store, Milo Center and San Juan Internet.)

MARLON CASTRO...died January 27th after a bout with cancer. Marlon was born September 20th 1980 and was 31 at the time of his death. He is survived by his wife and two children.

Runway lights at the San Pedro Airport...were recently vandalized. The wire was stolen in the latest case of unknown persons stealing copper wire. The runway lights were donated to San Pedro by Wings of Hope.

JERRY JEFF WALKER...will be appearing at Wet Willie's this weekend.

KELLY MCGUIRE...will be

playing at Fido's this week with a pre-Super Bowl Bash starting at 3pm.

ROAD REPAIR...has begun with hard core being dumped in the biggest holes in a never ending cycle of filling and grading the sand/dirt streets.

FIRST EVER AREA REPRESENTATIVE DEBATES...are tentatively scheduled for February 17th between incumbent Hon. Manuel Heredia Jr., PUP Standard Bearer Patty Arceo and Independent candidate Mike Campbell. The second round of the mayoral debates will be cancelled to allow

the Area Representative candidates to debate the issues on live TV.

MAYOR ELSA PAZ...has released her end of term report. This is the first financial report in three years and gave rise to more questions than answers. On Good Morning San Pedro co-host David Marin suggested that it would be good if future financial reports were issued in writing a week before the public presentation so the documented could be examined and meaningful questions asked and hopefully answered. The finances of the Town Council are being brought under scrutiny with

two of the three mayoral candidates promising forensic audits if elected. The Town Council Act requires financial reports from the Town Council quarterly.

BUSINESS CLIMATE...is depressed after a very slow start to the year. Many businesses are reporting worst ever for this period with no real hope until mid-February when bookings start to increase. The strength of the season remains in doubt.

CAYE CAULKER...water rates will remain unchanged as the nationwide rate reduction will not be applied to Caye Caulker.

The Independent POLITICS

Investing in a corrupt economy

By William (Mike) Campbell BRS

(Editor's note: Mike Campbell is a declared independent candidate seeking to become the area representative for the Belize Rural South constituency. His views, opinions, et cetera are his own and not necessarily those of The Independent. We will from time to time be inviting submissions from persons who are candidates in the upcoming municipal and general elections, but we expect that Mr. Campbell's column will become a regular feature in the newspaper's op-ed section.)



Foreign investment in Belize is at an all-time low. As foreign investment has been one of the factors that has driven our expansion over the last 30 years and is certainly needed to reignite our economy, we should look into some of the possible causes of this decline. Generally when someone has money to invest they look for, number one, a safe investment that is protected by law.

Foreign investors look closely at local politics and business customs as part of their due diligence exercise. They are specifically looking for factors that could affect the safety of their contemplated investments. Evidence of corruption in its various forms is a red flag to the investment communi-

ty. Most businesses realize that when overt favoritism exists, as foreigners, they will certainly be disadvantaged. The recent posting of an opinion by Janus on the Amandala website will scare any investor and is a clear indication that we have truly lost the definition of corruption and expect it and condone it in our society.

Janus states that it is perfectly acceptable for a victorious politician to reward his friends and financial contributors with favors. The practice of giving favors to your friends is called cronyism and is a form of political corruption. The practice of politicians rewarding those who financially contribute to their campaigns with favors

is the very definition of political corruption and in the US is punishable by stiff prison terms. Our political morals have fallen to where it is believed that these are perfectly acceptable practices. Publicly advocating corruption is obviously bad for the business climate and speaks volumes about our society.

How could any investor ever feel comfortable investing in a country that does not even know what corruption is and allows its politicians to flaunt the law with impunity? Until we address this problem we will not be able to attract the much needed foreign investment.

We have laws that require financial disclosures from elected officials. This would seem to work to the advantage of the elected official as he can clearly show he is not abusing his position to enrich himself. For some reason I cannot understand why the politicians, including the ones that passed the legislation, have failed to take advantage of this opportunity to clearly demonstrate their integrity even though there is a prescribed fine of \$10,000 for not filing the annual disclosure.

To the best of my knowledge each and every sitting member of the House has failed to comply with this most basic integrity requirement and most all that were seated in the previous House are also guilty of this violation. Considering that many are attorneys and Senior Counsels they no doubt can explain to us why they and their friends are exempt from these requirements and, more importantly, why they should be

returned to office when they blatantly ignore the law.

The other side of the coin is the lack of accountability by the parties themselves. Until candidates release campaign budgets and source of funds we are just playing a game. It is crucial to know who has contributed because, unlike Janus believes, it is not right to give favors to those who donated to your campaign. Sometimes contracts are issued or government property sold under circumstances that make us wonder why that happened. If we knew who had contributed to the various campaigns we could no doubt better understand many of the strange occurrences we have seen over the years.

We have no chance of attracting significant foreign investment until we deal with this problem. We can start right now in this election. **Do not vote for anyone who is in violation of the financial disclosure laws and don't vote for anyone who will not say what they are spending on their campaign and where the money came from.** That will be a start. It is time the people put an end to this moral deterioration and disregard for the law on the part of our elected officials that is ruining the credibility of our nation.



San Pedro Politics

Hon. Manuel Heredia Jr. launched his campaign for a third term as Area Representative for Belize Rural South on Decision 2012 Monday night January 30th. Hon. Heredia also shared some comments about various other topics under his Ministries. He stated that he had excellent relations with the cruise companies who had complemented him on his performance. He stated that the Tourism Village in Belize City was too small and needed to be made larger and problems in the industry stem from PUP mismanagement during their last term in office. Hon Heredia also stated that overnight tourism had increased last year and he sees it on schedule to show a 3%-4% growth rate for this year

His motto for this year is "Siempre Con Tigo", (Always With You) and he stated that the party had adopted it as their national slogan. He said that the current UDP was like the George Price era as they had also opened their arms to the Central Americans who he has always helped and that 75% of the San Pedro population was Central American or out of district voters. He won by over 1,000 votes last election amounting to 61% of the total and while conceding that Caye Caulker is a PUP stronghold he expects to win by an even larger margin this year. He stated that the PUP lost the last election because of their shabby treatment of Central Americans and out of district voters. When asked when the election would be called Heredia said that only the PM knew that but he personally wanted both elections to be held concurrently so he could better work with his Town Council team and that is what he had advised the PM and if the PM did decide to call the election for March 7th it would show how much the PM respected him.

Hon. Heredia stated that they had about 300 out of district voters they would be bringing in as they have a strong party machine and there is no way the PUP can win. Even though people are not completely satisfied they won't vote PUP. He stated that all the nationalities he has done have been 100% legal and correct in every respect and he would continue even after the election to help all who ask.

Hon. Heredia stressed repeatedly his close ties to the PM and how much he is trusted and respected as is evidenced by his three ministries. He said that he uses money from the ministry to help people on San Pedro by giving contributions to individuals for education, health and other expenses as he does all he can to help as many as possible. He mentioned that he had contributed



\$5,000 to Ocean Academy on Caye Caulker and helped them periodically and he always gives a little to each of the schools.

He mentioned the work being done to make the San Pedro Airport safer and more attractive and that after San Pedro was finished they would start on the extension of the Municipal Airstrip, which is exceptionally dangerous in its current state. Hon Heredia when asked about his plans for San Pedro he made several announcements. He stated that we needed a "government school" and that the Minister of Education has promised him that if he gets the land they will build a government school on San Pedro.. He announced that they would build a House of Culture for San Pedro, as it is the only town that does not have one and he is the Minister of Culture.

He also announced that the controversial Saca Chispas project was ready to go and should start before elections and he would work with the high school to make improvements and expand the Jr. College.

He also promised to refurbish the beaches of San Pedro. Concerning health care he said that they would first make a 24/7 Emergency Medical Service and then a full hospital for San Pedro. When asked about the streets that are a constant source of frustration for residents he stated that if they were all built up with hardcore and drainage they would last 15 years.

Hon. Heredia Jr. mentioned the squalid conditions in San Mateo and how the PUP had neglected but he has helped and will continue to help try to improve the conditions and stated that the government would be responsible for the cost of the main road into San Mateo. He said that the World Bank has agreed to loan \$5,000,000 to make improvements in San Mateo as all the current improvements have been paid for by the Town Council.

Minister Heredia said that it was true that there had been no major projects in San Pedro since he had been in office but stated that he had worked very hard for the people helping them with money for school

and doctors as well as helping with land matters and documentation needs and many others.

Hon Heredia said that Caye Caulker would receive a beach reclamation project, a new arts and crafts building, another football field and an expansion project for the R.C. school.

Minister Heredia was asked to comment on the allegations that he had interfered with the system in the case of the accused child molester that was released on \$500 bail. He stated that he did not bail the man out and the court records would show that. He says that he does go to the station when someone asks him for help. He talks to all concerned and looks at the evidence and advises but never interferes with the case. He reiterated that he helps anyone that asks him and the entire matter was just a malicious rumor that he had traced back to the PUP and he was sure he knew who started it.

This is a very hot topic in San Pedro and many of both parties are questioning seriously the entire affair and his involvement as the bail was only \$500 for the offense and no explanation has been offered. This is the number one topic on the streets and in the shops and that is what triggered the question.

Tuesday night Patty Arceo, PUP Standard Bearer presented her plan for San Pedro. Patty started her presentation by outlining the accomplishments while in office from 1998-2003. During this time the cobblestone road project was start-

ed, a new police station and fire station were also started. Also the marina project and DFC projects were advanced during her term of office. There were also various parks and playgrounds that were improved during her term in office. Equally Caye Caulker received many improvements during her term of office. Ms Arceo promised to continue to work for the improvement of Caye Caulker by improving all services including schools and health-care.

Ms Arceo stated that she promised that San Pedro would receive a proportion of the tax money we generate and announced that the PUP was proposing a fixed date for national elections with a four year term of office as part of their manifesto. She promised to improve parks and sports facilities for all children and make a new cemetery that is badly needed in San Pedro. Ms. Arceo also acknowledged the common problem of roads and promised to do something about it.

Patty stated that she would build a new primary school and would build a Jr. College. When asked about the police issues in San Pedro she said that she would build police and fire substations in the various neighborhoods that would be manned by civilians.

Concerning our health care problems she said they would build a polyclinic 2 that would have an emergency room and 24/7 service. She also stressed a strong commitment to the environment and sustainable development.

CLASSIFIEDS

LIQUOR LICENCE NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that Auspin Gabourel is applying for Publican Special Liquor License to be operated at "Club Malibu", Dangriga, under the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Ordinance Revised Edition 2000.

Notice is hereby given that Carolee Emmanuelo & Robert Clare is applying for Restaurant & Bar Liquor License to be operated at "Hidden Falls", Placencia, under the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Ordinance Revised Edition 2000.

Notice is hereby given that Sarita Teck is applying for Malt & Cider Liquor License to be operated at "Jaguar Mountain Cafe", Maya Center, under the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Ordinance Revised Edition 2000.

Notice is hereby given that Marco Chan is applying for Publican Special Liquor License to be operated at "Lamasia Bar", Bella Vista Village, under the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Ordinance Revised Edition 2000.

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The Sporting Life: More than just a rememberance: Ariel Rosado Foundation inaugurated

By Marshall Nunez, Sr.

A nice crowd of people from diverse backgrounds including the media, education and legal professionals as well as representative of various sporting associations, filled the Santa Rita Room at the Radisson Fort George Hotel on Tuesday, January, 31st, 2012. The occasion was the inauguration of the Ariel Rosado Memorial Education Foundation.

Almost 9 months after the Saturday, May 14th, 2011 tragic accident that claimed the life of this outstanding Belizean youth, Ariel Rosado, only 3 weeks after his 28th birthday, Ariel's family and friends believe that this young man who excelled both athletically and academically must be remembered as an inspiration and role model for other Belizean youth. Initially there was the recommendation to dedicate the 9th of March race in his memory but many of the people close to him felt that his memory should last for more than just one day every year. So the Sanchez family, from Bruce Bike Shop as well as his parents, Alvaro and Dorla Rosado, came up with the idea of the foundation. The first meeting was held in December 2011. Then the foundation with the founding members was formed on January 18th, 2012. That resulted in today's inauguration of the Ariel Rosado Memorial Education Foundation.

The founding members of the foundation are Esme Anderson, Belize Cycling Association, Barney Brown, Santino Castillo, Sylvia Cattouse, Carmen Cawich, Eamon Courtenay, Christopher Coye, Perry Gibson, Terry Gordon, Mose Hyde, Reggie Jex, Albert Jones, Stacey Kelly, Femi Ketz, Douglas Lamb, Amalia Mai, Hilly Martinez, Brian Neal, Alvaro Rosado, Dorla Rosado, Karen Rosito, Bruce Sanchez Sr., Bruce Sanchez Jr., Samantha Sharp, Wilmot Simmons, Matthew Smiling, Winston Swift, Jules Vasquez and Paul Wade.

At the brief inaugural ceremony Dr. Alvaro Rosado, Ariel's father, made a presentation as well as founding member Terry Gordon.

In his presentation Dr. Rosado said "While participating in competitive cycling Ariel received his education at Grace Primary School, St. John's College and the University of Belize before taking a rest from cycling to successfully pursue his Bachelors in Law degree at the University of Guyana and then went on to do a Masters Degree in Corporate Law at the University of the West In-

dies in Barbados. He successfully completed the coursework and at the time of his death he had just completed his dissertation for the Masters Degree."

Terry Gordon in his presentation said "Ariel dominated junior cycling in Belize at ages fourteen and fifteen winning every junior race during that period. At age 15 Ariel realized that there was no challenge in the junior ranks and decided to start racing with the senior cyclists. At age 16 he surprised the Belizean cycling community by beating a field of 51 senior cyclists, including foreigners, to win the 2000 KREM New Years Day Cycling Classic. He went on to win every major cycling race in Belize except the Elite Cross Country Classic. At age 17 he travelled to the USA to race against 152 of the best Junior Cyclists in the USA to vie for a spot on the US National Junior



Cycling Team. He did not qualify for the US National Team but gave a good account of himself placing 23rd, 24th and 60th in the qualifying races. In 2003 Ariel captured the Belize National Cycling Road Championship Title."

Although Ariel was a decorated and accomplished cyclist, it is disappointing that no official member of the Belize National Cycling Association was present. Coincidentally, Mr. Gerald Garbutt, who was the president of the cycling association when Ariel dominated the junior category and transitioned to the senior ranks, attended the inauguration.

The Foundation has been established to raise and manage funds to provide high school scholarships and

sporting opportunities for deserving Belizean youths. The Foundation hopes to realize this goal through corporate sponsorship, individual donations, individual and corporate pledges, fundraising through an annual ride and acting as a conduit to manage scholarships provided by individuals and corporations.

The main fund raising activity of the Foundation will be an annual ride to be held on the third Saturday after the Annual Cross Country Cycle Race.

At the ceremony donation and pledges were accepted. The first \$1,000 was ceremoniously handed over by Ariel's 7 year old daughter Saniyya Rosado. Mr. Astor Foreman, a Belizean who resides in New York and wrote the lyrics to the musical hits "I do believe I'm losing you" and "Love and Tranquility" was in attendance and gave a donation. Over \$3,000 was collected and there were pledges for more. The fundraising ride is scheduled to be from San Ignacio to Belize City with Belmopan being a refueling stop, and diverting from the Western to the Northern Highway through the Boom-Hattieville Road. Another suggestion is to have a simultaneous ride coming from Orange Walk and joining the San Ignacio ride at the Northern Highway Boom junction.

At The Independent we salute the initiative, we support it and we wish it all the best of success.

Weekend Warriors Jawmeighan continues to dominate

If cycling fans were looking for drama this weekend, they certainly found it in the third stage of the Belize Water Services Weekend Warriors Series. On Sunday, January 29th, some twenty-eight riders lined up along the Western Highway for a

gruelling forty mile race from Rockville to Busman Arnold Hill ...and the competition came not only from their fellow cyclists and the course, but also from the weather. A deluge descended on the riders from start to finish and was a significant factor in the overall results.

The peloton was intact in the rollers between Rockville and Belmopan with the only separations coming at two sprints for extra points. At the La Democracia primie, it was Santino's Ernest "Jawmeighan" Meighan taking first to claim three points; Horizon's Kenroy "Smokes" Gladden rolled up second to claim as many points while teammate Valan Symns settled for third and a single point. At mile forty, Horizon teammates Collet "Bunas" Maheia and Warren Coye took first and second respectively while Santino "The Chief" Castillo claimed third. But seconds later, tragedy struck as a series of spills put more cyclists on the asphalt than not. While some had to call it a day, a couple brave souls hobbled to the line with broken bikes and bleeding bodies, a testament of either serious athletic dedication or pure insanity.

And while their colleagues regrouped in the rear, up ahead the survivors continued to race. A flat in Camalote put overall contender Warren Coye of Team Horizon out of the peloton but a quick tyre change, hard work and the help of teammates put Coye back with the crowd on Mount Hope. In the rain and cold the peloton pushed for the line at the top of Busman Arnold Hill.

Continued on page 15



Ernest "Jawmeighan" Meighan, Barney Brown, Ryan Willoughby & Mitchel Lewis

INTERNATIONAL MOTORCROSS COMES TO BELIZE

A motorcross was held on Sunday January 29th at the Peter August Stadium in Santa Elena, Cayo, what began in Benque Viejo with an international motocross competition at the Western Free Zone area has grown into the Belize Motocross Association, with the primary participants being from the Mennonite communities.

Over six hundred (600) supporters braved the rain to watch the daring young men compete at this extreme sport event. The riders hail from Spanish Lookout and Blue Creek, in Belize, San Felipe, Guatemala, and Columbia.

In the MX145 (Pro) class, Travis Dyck (Spanish Lookout) was the first across the finish line followed by Peter Wolfe and Jimmy Braun (Blue Creek) respectively. The field totalled 11 riders.

In the MX-250 (Intermediate) class, Colombian Yerson Ortiz was first, followed by Gordon Dueck and Chris Reimer (Spanish Lookout) respectively. The field of 13 riders included 6 Guatemalans.

In the MX-150 (Beginners) class, Marlon Dueck (Spanish Lookout), Brain Dyck (Blue Creek) and Abe Wiebe (Spanish Lookout) finished in that order.

A release from the race organizer said; "It is evident a new sub-culture within the Mennonite Communities has come to age to excel in these extreme sporting events with competing against international riders, carrying on the traditions that hard work does produce success, making all of Belize proud of their effort."



Weekend Warriors Jawmeighan continues to dominate

Continued from page 14

Ernest Meighan continues to dominate his class, rolling in first, edging out Scotia's Barney Brown and M & M Engineering's Leam Stewart. The top three were followed by Horizon's Andrew "Papa" Brown and Kenroy "Smokes" Gladden; Santino's Jim Scott; BNE's Stephen Bissett; FT Williams/BCB's Dean Boyce and Horizon's Warren Coye. Weather and carnage on the road meant it was several minutes before Horizon's Collet "Bunas" Mahaeia pulled up to round out the top ten ahead of a staggered string of cyclists.

The big picture looks like this: the top three in the Masters A division is Santino's Ernest Meighan in first with 94 points while Horizon's Kenroy Smokes Gladden is a very distant second with 49 points and his Horizon teammate Sherwin "Fada" Latchman is third with 42 points.

In Veteran's A, Scotia's Barney Brown is out front with 75 points. Warren Coye lost ground overall, falling four points behind but stays in second with 71 points while Horizon's Collet "Bunas" Maheia is third with 63 points.

In the Masters B division, crashes on the road put six of the 22 par-

ticipants out of the race. Cayo Rental's Geoffrey Waight's performance was good enough to not only finish first but also claim maximum points in the three sprint primies on the course. But Waight's one day domination does not affect the overall standings as Horizon's Ryan Willoughby still leads the class with 78 points followed by FT/BCB's Dean Belisle with 71 points and Charlie Slusher of Team Typhoon with 65 points. Kudos to Slusher for completing the course despite a serious slash in his leg sustained during one of the spills.

In the Veteran's B category, Truckers' Posse Mitchel Lewis leads with 75 points ahead of FT/BCB teammates Antonio Escarpeta and Valentine Sosa who have 64 and 41 points respectively.

For the next two weekends the riders will enjoy a much needed hiatus to recover from their injuries and regroup. Race 4 also promises to be eventful as it will see the riders duke it out across the hills of the Hummingbird Highway between the Belmopan Comprehensive High School to Saint Margaret's village and back. So on February 19th make sure you've got a front row seat to the action!

1st Police Youth Cadet Corps drill competition



On Saturday January 28, 2012 the first national Police Youth Cadet Corps Basic Foot Drill Competition was held at the Police National Training Academy in the City of Belmopan under the theme "Uprightness Hearts and Mind". At 8:00am we had representation of six out of the ten formations: Orange Walk, San Ignacio, Benque Viejo, Dangriga, Intermediate Southern Formation and Punta Gorda.

163 Cadets participated and by the end of the third round, the first place trophy went to Benque Viejo Cadets along with first place medals.

Second place went to San Ignacio and third to Orange Walk. The Spectacle display Trophy was won by San Ignacio formation.

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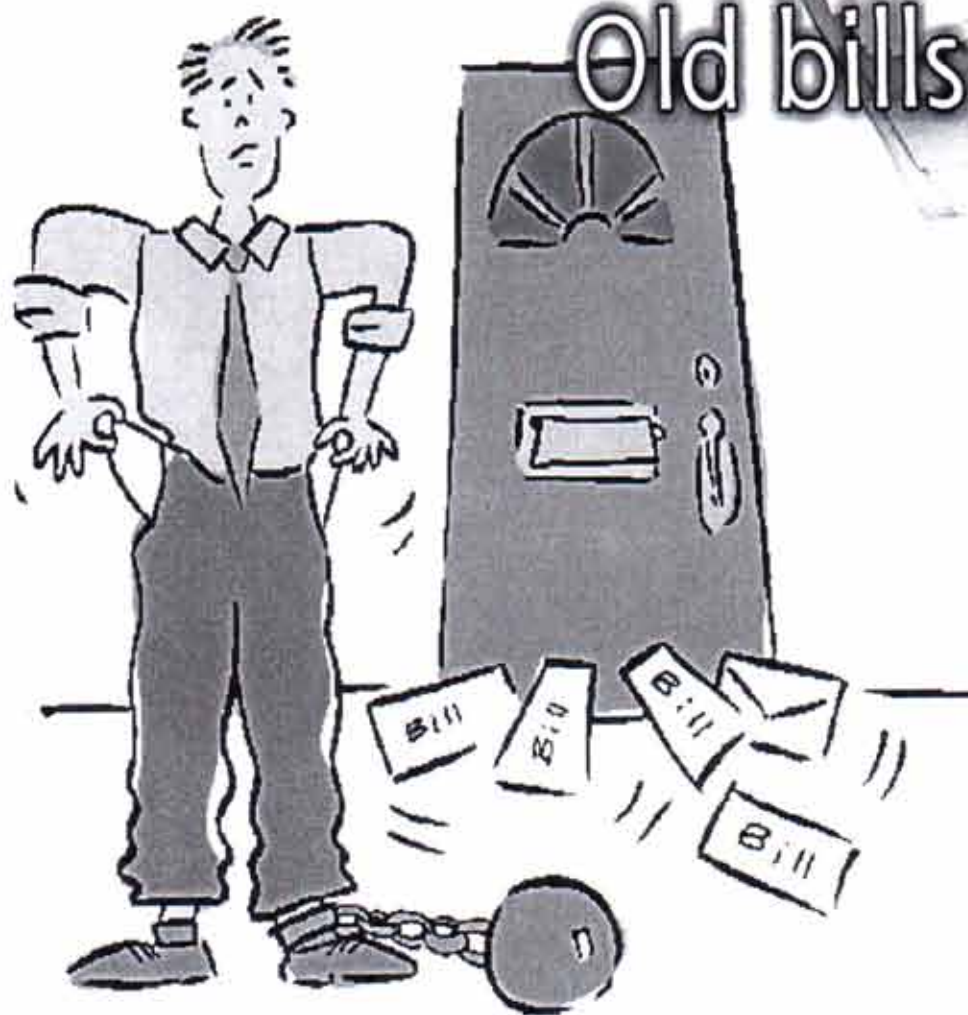
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