



The Independent

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DETAINEE
RUMBLE**

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Cardona slams Barrow



Thursday, February 9, 2012

BELIZE CITY – A fairly muted 2012 General Elections campaign got some fire yesterday when former UDP Orange Walk East area representative Marcel Cardona called a press conference to announce that not only was he not seeking re-election, but that he and his committee would be supporting the PUP candidate Dr. Tulio Mendez.

But Cardona, an attorney by profession, did not just make a meek announcement and go quietly into the good night. He chose to make the most of his opportunity to rail against his former party, especially its leader Prime Minister Dean Barrow, accusing it and him of corruption, cronyism and incompetence.

In a 12 page presentation that took him over 20 minutes to deliver, Cardona denounced the Barrow government, calling its tenure in office a “4-YEAR REIGN OF TERROR, INTIMIDATION, OPPRESSION

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**Belize
featured in
ABC's Hit
Romance
Reality
Series**

“The Bachelor”

Tuesday, February 7, 2012

BELIZE CITY: An episode of the hit romance reality series “The Bachelor” which was shot on location in Belize, on Ambergris Caye, will air next Monday, February 13th (8:00–10:01 p.m., ET), on the ABC Television Network.

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Dondre Brannon, 19

Another Brannon shot dead!

Dead teen's father: “I
can't take anymore!”

Sunday, February 5, 2012

BELIZE CITY – The Brannon family are reeling from tragedy that struck on Sunday, February 5, 2012 around 8:30p.m.

Continued on page 2

City residents fear resurgent gun violence



Scenes of crime technicians search for expended shells Tuesday night in the heart of downtown Belize City right in front of Central Park after three men were injured in a spray of gun fire. Belize City residents fear that the gang truce may be dissolving and once again there may be carnage on the streets.

Cardona slams Barrow

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and VICTIMIZATION” and listing 14 examples of same.

In the presentation, excerpts of which are reproduced on pages 8 and 9 of this edition of the newspaper, Cardona said that he paid the “ultimate price of being ostracized from, and punished and victimized and humiliated by the very UDP party which I had helped to raise from the very ashes of its double shattering defeats in 1998 and then in 2003,” for daring to speak out in December 2008 about a secret “sweetheart” contract signed between NICH, a

statutory body under his portfolio, and a tour operator.

He explained to a packed room and a much wider audience listening via radio broadcast that: “Choosing to publicly RESIGN from the UDP, or apply for membership in another Political Party would have automatically led to the Prime Minister Dean Barrow invoking the provisions under Section 59(2)(e) to strip me of further membership in the House of Representatives, and would have almost certainly have led to the holding of a Special Election called a By-Election for the people of the Or-

ange Walk East Constituency alone, to decide upon and elect a new Area Representative for the Orange Walk East Constituency.

“Obviously, given that the UDP Party is presently in Government, this would have given the UDP Party the opportunity to focus and concentrate all their resources and the Government’s resources behind their UDP Candidate in Orange Walk East, in order to give their UDP Candidate in Orange Walk East a CLEARLY UNFAIR EDGE or ADVANTAGE over any other political candidate in the By-Election.

“It was to prevent this possibility, that I chose to endure years of unjust treatment, victimization, disrespect, abuse, mistreatment and even physical assaults and brutalization by members of my own UDP Party.

“But this issue about VOLUNTARY RESIGNATION from

the UDP, or the INVOKING of the CROSSING THE FLOOR provisions has become a moot point with the recent announcement of early General Elections and the dissolution of the National Assembly on Friday of last week.”

Cardona then went on to accuse the Barrow administration of nepotism, and listing 11 examples of what he considered blatant examples of such.

For the incumbent UDP Cardona’s resignation was not unexpected but they must be bothered by his defection and ringing condemnation. Their propagandists had been pointing to the resignation of 3 PUP candidates as momentum building after a series of gaffes, bad news polls, a recent spike in violent crime and a downgrade of the nation’s credit rating since the election announcement had put them somewhat on the defensive.

Belize featured in ABC’s Hit Romance Reality Series “The Bachelor”

Continued from page 1

The episode will feature a special group and intimate one-on-one dates with the newest Bachelor, Ben Flajnik. Fan-favourite Flajnik, the down-to-earth and romantic guy whose heartfelt proposal was rejected by Ashley Hebert on The Bachelorette, gets another shot at love.

Skeptical at first, Ben, a 29-year-old successful winemaker from Sonoma, California, now knows first-hand that love can happen – and he’s hoping to find it as “The Bachelor”.

In the ABC hit primetime reality series, one lucky man is offered the chance to find true love. A single and eligible bachelor embarks on a romantic journey, getting to know a bevy of beautiful bachelorettes, gradually narrowing the field to the one woman to whom he may propose marriage in the dramatic season finale.

Ben Flajnik and his six dates arrived in Belize on Wednesday, October 19, 2011, to enjoy an island getaway and experience exotic dates in Belize. According to Ambergris Today, during the filming here Bachelor Ben and his co-stars visited Shark Ray Alley at the Hol Chan Marine Reserve, has an exotic date atop the magnificent Maya Ruins of Lamanai in the Orange Walk District, jumps from a helicopter into the Great Blue Hole of Belize located in the coral reef atoll of Lighthouse Reef, goes on dates on board sailing boats and a day trip to the neighbouring island of Caye Caulker, among other great adventures and dinner dates at popular resorts/restaurants on Ambergris Caye.

Another Brannon shot dead!

Continued from page 1

Dondre Brannon, 19, was riding his bicycle on Central American Boulevard when he was shot by an unidentified black man when he reached the Iguana Street intersection. The shooter fled the scene leaving no trace or clues to his identity.

Brannon, a barber and a student of Gwen Lizarraga Evening program, and a resident of the Antelope Street extension area, was struck in the lower right side of the abdomen. He was rushed to the KMH where he later died while undergoing treatment around 9:35p.m.

For the young Brannon’s father, Basil Brannon, the loss of his son is a terrible blow for him and his family. The family is still dealing with the loss of two of Dondre’s uncles, Kevin and Phillip Brannon who were shot dead on Mothers’ Day in 2006 when their car was sprayed with bullets. Two men were arrested and charged for the murders but got off and since then the case has gone cold. Prior to that tremendous loss, the Brannon family lost another family member who drowned in the early nineties.

“Jules, I don’t know how much more I can take. I’ve had it. It’s too much for one person; it’s too much for the family, and I want this to stop,” Basil Brannon told the media. He believes his son was targeted.

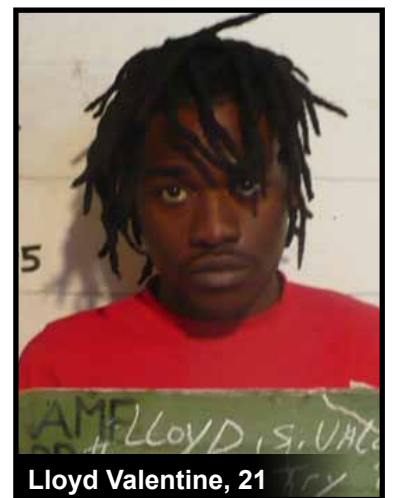
The father and son were more like friends, Basil said. His son always called him when he wanted something. Brannon said that Dondre was mischievous but never involved in any gang.

Like many others who have lost loved ones in the unrelenting gun war in our streets, Basil Brannon is not hopeful for justice on his son’s behalf. He just wishes the violence to stop.

Robbers hit RC Imports on Cemetery Road



Christopher Hyde, 16



Lloyd Valentine, 21

Sunday January 29, 2012

BELIZE CITY – Vinod Chawla, owner of RC Imports located at #16 Cemetery Road in Belize City was held at gun point by three black men on Sunday, January 29, 2012 around 1:15pm. Chawla told police that the men assaulted him and robbed him of an undisclosed amount of cash and cheques.

One of the men wore a white t-shirt and a black ¾ jeans pants and slippers. The other two, Chawla said, were dressed in full black with black dread caps on.

Police have since recovered \$2,000.00 in cash and arrested Christopher Hyde, 16 of a West Canal address and Lloyd Valentine, 20 of a Trench Alley address both of Belize City. The duo have been charged jointly for robbery.



Police and detainee rumble

Monday January 30, 2012

BELIZE CITY – Police Sergeant Alfonso Aban is recovering from being bitten on his right thumb by a man who was in police custody for allegedly shooting police officer Nigel White at the Belama sub-station in March of 2011.

According to police, Justo Lopez, 33 a resident of Belama Phase II Area has been positively identified as the shooter.

According to police Lopez was being escorted from the Belama Phase II on Monday, January 30, around 5:45 in the evening when he attempted to escape. Police didn't get far as officers were able to capture him.

Lopez however did not make it easy for the officer and bit Sergeant Aban on his right thumb during a struggle that ensued between him and the officer. The bite police say was no ordinary bite as Lopez held a firm grip on the officer's thumb for some time and it took the assistance of other officers to free Sergeant Aban's thumb from the clutch of Lopez's jaws. Sergeant Aban had to be treated at the KMHM for two bite wounds to his thumb. His wounds were classified as wounding and Lopez has been charged in connection with the officer's injuries.

What police did not share in their report is that they put a beating on Lopez that he (Lopez) had to be hospitalized.

Lopez claimed that he was away in Canada and only returned to Belize because he learned that he was wanted by



police. Lopez said that he walked across the northern border and surrendered himself to officers there and was immediately taken to the Corozal police station and then later transferred to Belize City with no event.

In Belize City, Lopez said that he was first locked up then later taken upstairs handcuffed. Once upstairs he said that four officers questioned him about the gun (purportedly the one used to shoot Officer White). If he (Lopez) could not or would not answer, the officers promised to kill him that very night, Lopez said.

"After that, one of them knocked me in the back of my head. I was knocked out. When I woke up it's because I am in the room. They put duct tape on my head, and then they started to kick me in my stomach and my back. I told them that I didn't know anything, but they still beat me up," Lopez said.

In an effort to stop the beating, Lopez said that he told the officers that



the weapon was buried in his mother's yard near her septic tank.

"They told me that they will kill me and throw me in the Haulover River, and nobody will know where I am. When they reached in my mother's yard, I told them that the gun is in the septic tank," Lopez told the media on Tuesday from his hospital bed at the KMHM.

His ordeal worsened when he and the officers reached his mother's home in Belama Phase II. Lopez attempted to run out of the vehicle, he said to let his mother know that he was back in the country. His attempt failed when one of the officers grabbed him by his hair and started to punch him in the face. An officer (Aban) got his thumb in Lopez's mouth and that is when Lopez said that he bit the officer while he was being beaten by about five officers.

Lopez said that he pleaded his case with a senior officer who was on

the scene but was only beaten more.

On Thursday, February 2nd, Justo Lopez was hit with a slew of charges when he was taken before Magistrate Hettie Mae Stuart. He was charged for attempted murder, dangerous harm, use of deadly means of harm and robbery allegedly committed against officer Nigel White.

Police reported then that PC White was on duty alone at the Belama police sub-station when a dark complexion man entered and pointed a gun at him and fired a single shot which found its mark in the center of the officer's chest. The man then robbed Officer White of his .38 Smith and Wesson service revolver. The man along with two other persons ran up Albert Hoy Street and made good their escape.

Officer White was found lying at the door of the station. Police recovered a .40 caliber S&W expended shell and a pair of slippers from the scene.

In April of last year, three men, Elroy Smith, Karim Morris and Linsford Acosta were charged and remanded in connection with the shooting. One other person was being sought. That other person along with Morris and Acosta are accused of stealing the officer's weapon which is the property of the Government of Belize. The other men also faced similar charges of attempted murder, robbery, dangerous harm and deadly means of harm.

No plea was taken from Justo Lopez who police believe is the final piece to their puzzle and he was remanded to the Hattiesville Central Prison until February 27, when a preliminary inquiry into the matter will commence.

Francis will deliver FREETOWN!

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EDITORIAL

The Choice – Elections 2012

Most pragmatic Belizeans will be voting on March 7th for the future, and not on what they think they know has happened in the past. Most pragmatic Belizeans will vote for the candidates to form the next government whom they believe will be best able to lead the nation through what is becoming more and more apparent, will be tough economic times ahead.

Belize has been wallowing in economic doldrums for the past three and a half years and the forecast is for at best limited economic growth. Meanwhile our debt bill is coming due. We must pay the piper.

To date none of the contestants have offered us, the voters, a cogent plan for economic resuscitation and development. The opposition, to be fair, has had a limited time since the announcement by the government of general elections in less than a month's time, but clearly the government had been preparing and campaigning for another term in office for the past several months.

Mr. Barrow has said, in an unfortunate choice of words at his press conference announcing the elections, that he is seeking a mandate to deal with the Superbond but didn't he already have a mandate? What happened? How does he intend to deal with Belize's debt issues?

The most pragmatic part of the electorate, the business community, has been slow to offer campaign financing to the contestants because they are not hearing anything that they find persuasive. They have been bombarded and wearied of the blame game. The blame game is now an over-used tactic by the competitors and the electorate is becoming inured to it.

Neither party comes before the electorate with clean hands – it is only a matter of degree according to individual perception. Both have had almost equal turns at the steering wheel since Independence, and both have made their mistakes. If we are to judge by the current circumstances, there is enough blame to go around.

Belizeans want competent government, the kind of administration that will no longer lurch from crisis to crisis. It wants a government free from the cancer of corruption. Like an abused spouse or dependent, it is tired of being battered by incompetent and corrupt administrations but feels it has nowhere else to turn.

It is tired of the gaudy and over-the-top promises. It not only wants the political parties to clean up their act but it badly wants to turn the page on this chapter in our history.

As voters we want the candidates to address the immediate matter of the economy. We believe that Belize faces a difficult time in the short term. The incumbents have been reckless and irresponsible by not addressing the matter of debt repayment or by having a cavalier attitude when they do, do. The next administration will have to make hard choices and will have to right the ship of state. It has been done before and must be done again. The question is who will be best able to do this.

The next administration must make the commitment in word and deed to more participatory democracy. It must pursue political reforms that will make for more inclusive governance, and which will promote transparency and accountability. It must revisit legislation regarding the Senate as a true oversight body and a check against the near absolute power of the Cabinet dictatorship. There must be changes made to the referendum and crossing-the-floor laws, the former to ensure that it is used to approve any amendments to the constitutional provisions guaranteeing our human rights, the latter to enhance our democracy by allowing backbenchers to publicly disagree with their party in government.

The next administration must act far more proactively in addressing Belize's national security needs, and must provide better policing and penal management. No one has any confidence the current "gang truce" will hold or is sustainable. There has been some progress, yes, but Belizeans are fearful of a future in which powerful gangs have taken root and have now been apparently institutionalized as part of the societal structure. Is this, for example, how we intend to deal with the cartels?

The next administration must restore local and international investors' confidence lost not only through the "nationalization" of the public utilities, but also by the "quitar" (land acquisition) policy, and an alarming display of non-concern for record business and home foreclosures. The next Government of Belize must be prepared to turn away from these divisive policies and be prepared instead to embrace a way forward that is the result of extensive consultation perhaps through the revival of the National Economic Council, and the utilization of a social partner framework.

Belize's social and economic development must be the centerpiece of the campaign. The matter of debt restructuring is a must. Who will best able to negotiate with our international creditors both for the Superbond and the nationalization? One respected opinion we have seen, for example, concludes that the "nationalization" of BTL and BEL may have increased the government's national debt by almost "half of the notorious Belize Government Superbond, with interest costs equal to or more expensive than the Superbond."

For Belize to survive and then thrive, we have to get real. Enough with the promises, the giveaways, the constant raiding of the public purse for political purposes! It is long past time the political aspirants got real. The business community is not impressed with the cavalcade of promises and giveaways – in fact it is dismayed by it.

The silent majority waits and watches. It is pondering who best to lead, not who was worse. Their decision will turn on what plans are presented to them, not on what is given away or by way of promises and pledges to the masses.

Entire Conejo Workforce Sacked by US Capital Energy

BELIZE CITY: The following is a press release from SATIM, the Sarstoon Temash Institute for Indigenous Management regarding the attempt by US Capital Energy, an oil exploration company, to conduct seismic testing in Conejo Village, Toledo District.

US Capital Energy, which has accepted publicly claimed to have illegally cut seismic line number 08 through Conejo's territory was constructed by mistake, has sacked all 23 of Conejo's workers in retaliation for not yet being given the go-ahead to place explosives on this line.

Conejo's workers had been ordered back from their work-sites by US Capital Energy and taken to the company's Barranco headquarters, where José María Martínez sacked the workers at 10:30 on Thursday 2 February.

The Conejo leadership had been waiting for an attorney being available to attend a village meeting called to decide the community's response to the company's request to operate the line.

The sackings amount to collective punishment for the village leadership's insistence that the community decide together their response to the company's activities, including its transgressions and ultimatums. The leadership's insistence on having an attorney attend the village meeting simply reflects their desire to ensure that the village's relations with the oil company be based upon respect for the community's right to free, prior, and informed consent.

Martínez had previously called Conejo's Alcalde Eufemio Makin and Chairperson Enrique Makin to a meeting on Saturday, 28 January at the Coral House Inn in Punta Gorda, where he had pressed the leaders to give an immediate answer as to whether the company could insert and detonate explosives on the seismic line illegally opened on their land.

Martínez had told them: "We're in a hurry, we need to know urgently, to know if we need to divert. And if that happens the people of Conejo will no longer have work."

The leaders had responded that they could not give an immediate answer, as the decision needed to be made by the whole village, and they needed to know their rights.

Enrique Makin (chairman) responded that the village needed to decide as a whole,

saying to Martínez: "We know that you were not allowed to enter. We have a copy of the permit, as have you, and it shows you were not allowed to enter our land. You were cutting the line hoping we would not know. We will have to meet with our people, we will not respond right now."

The Supreme Court of Belize ruled, on 18 October 2007, that the government must: "abstain from any acts that might lead the agents of the government itself, or third parties acting with its acquiescence or its tolerance, to affect the existence, value, use or enjoyment of the property located in the geographic area occupied and used by the Maya people of Santa Cruz and Conejo unless such acts are pursuant to their informed consent and in compliance with the safeguards of the Belize Constitution.

This order include, but not be limited to, directing the government to abstain from:

- i. issuing any lease or grants to lands or resources under the National Lands Act or any other Act;
- ii. registering any such interest in land;
- iii. issuing any regulations concerning land or resources use; and
- iv. issuing any concessions for resource exploitation and harvesting, including concessions, permits or contracts authorizing logging, prospecting or exploration, mining or similar activity under the Forest Act, the Mines and Minerals Act, the Petroleum Act, or any other Act."

Conejo's position is therefore entirely consistent with Belizean law, while US Capital Energy is compounding one transgression with another.

The company is seeking to determine the villagers' response to their demands both through collective punishment and the abrupt fulfillment of promises made in August 2010 to immediately supply the village with computers. US Capital Energy started installing the computers at the school on Friday, 3 February, a day after sacking the entire workforce from the village.

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Opinions

By Rhenae Nunez



JUST SAYIN'

Sinking ship or finally a chance to heal

Leader of the Opposition, Honorable Francis Fonseca sounded contrite in his comments following the departure of Anthony Mahler as PUP standard bearer for Caribbean Shores division – it was a blow to the party.

The same cannot be said of the resignations of Mark Espot and Cordel Hyde. While the UDP will certainly milk this latest occurrence for all the political mileage it portends, the news of the two latter resignations come as no surprise to yours truly.

The resignations were sensational and did send a shock wave throughout the body politic but were not in the least bit surprising. The resignations follow in the true modus-operandi of the duo – hopefully their penchant to destroy has been satisfied, and that way the PUP can finally focus on the campaign at hand and heal.

The news of Espot's resignation revisited memories of the day Said Musa announced that he was stepping down as Party Leader. Many of us felt then, as we do now, that his decision was premature and did not allow the party time to take in the devastating loss at the polls and having had to deal with another major event may have triggered a cascade that may have just now culminated.

The PUP was attempting to do a lot of things right when a lot was wrong in the hopes of dusting off and moving on but there could have been no moving on until the discord that had been brewing especially during the PUP's second term in office had been settled.

The action by seven members of cabinet dubbed G7 will no doubt be etched in the minds of Belizeans who were old enough to understand the magnitude to that action.

In his book, **With Malice Toward None**, Said Musa wrote: "The first crack in the government's collective armour occurred on August 10, 2004. The Minister of Health, Mr. Jose Coye in a television interview criticized the policy of the Social Security Board lending money without adequate collateral. The Amandala newspaper attacked the government for allowing Social Security funds used to securitizing foreign loans for a high risk company Intelco. The DFC was experiencing an unduly high default rate in non-performing loans. The rating agencies – Standard & Poors and Moody's were beginning to downgrade Belize's investment prospects."

Similarly today's announcement by Mark Espot comes on the heels of another downgrade of Belize's credit ratings by Standard & Poors and by Moody's.

Musa in his book went on to say, "As the saying goes, when it rains it pours! Confidence in the economy was under attack from without and within. The unkindest cut of all came from within. On August 12 at 8:30 a.m. six Ministers called on me at the Prime Minister's Office in Belmopan. These Ministers – Jose Coye, Mark Espot, Cordel Hyde, Eamon Courtney, Servulo Baeza and Godfrey Smith presented me with a letter signed by all of them and informed me that the Deputy Prime Minister John Briceno (who was out of the country) was in full agreement with the contents."

Today none of the seven are in the running for the elections except for John Briceno who dramatically demitted the office of Leader of Opposition in early October of last year citing personal reasons and health issues. Unless Briceno is looking to top Mark Espot's act, all indications are that he will be contesting the upcoming General Elections.

Although the day's event caused a political tail spin, the bigger news that broke on Monday, February 06, 2012, was the further downgrade of Belize's credit rating by Standard & Poors and Moody's which illuminates the reason why Dean Barrow is seeking the ultimate bailout – we are in dire economic straits.

The way the UDP has conducted themselves and the business of governing has been indecorous and is not amusing to observers. S&P said today that, **"the downgrade reflects signs of lower political willingness to service Belize's external commercial debt obligations,"** explained Standard & Poor's credit analyst Kelli Bissett.

It is one thing to be unable to pay your bills but distinctly another when you demonstrate unwillingness to pay. Barrow's roguish behavior has confirmed his words made six years ago in December of 2006 when he was mouthing off about the "Superbond". He said then that "We will be known as an economically failed state. We will be known as a hard pay, can't pay, vagabond nation." Barrow has presided over his ominous words becoming our reality.

Only Barrow and his sycophants buy into his rhetoric – S&P doesn't seem impressed at all. "The nature of the statement and prominent public office of the speaker signals, from a credit perspective, lower predictability that the government will continue to service its external commercial debt."

"Although a future United Democratic Party (UDP) government could

Impartial View: *Why the UDP have always been a one-term government*

By Marshall Nunez, Sr.

We're into the final few weeks before the 2012 elections and I've suggested several times in several ways that the real reason for the Prime Minister calling the elections has a lot to do with the economic condition of the nation. The Standards and Poors report confirms what many economists have been speculating over the past several months. The long and short of the SP downgrading of Belize is essentially that the economic forecast for Belize does not look very well. So it is safe to suggest that the main reason why the Prime Minister has set the elections before presenting the 2012 budget is because the budget would have a very devastating effect on the nation.

Many of the projects that the UDP government has promised that should take place early this year were just election promises. When you do serious examination of those same projects many of them have been recycled from the past three budgets. The UDP has spent the last 4 years blaming the previous PUP administration for everything that they have failed to accomplish. As a matter of fact now that election campaign is on, the UDP is recycling the same issues in their political commercials that they used in their campaign prior to their February 2008 elections.

Surely the PUP in 2008 was not perfect and for their mismanagement and their shortcomings the Belizean electorate swept them out of office in what became their most devastating defeat in any elections. And perhaps the PUP has not done enough to convince the electorate that they have totally reformed themselves from that type of administration that the people believed failed them between 2003 and 2008. But during that term of office for the PUP they were able to secure international funding in the form of loans and even grants. In

the past few years, however, the UDP administration was not able to get any grants – as a matter of fact over the past almost 8 months all we were getting from the Barrow administration were promises of monies approved by international financial institutions. But the country hasn't gotten the funds. So many of the capital for projects were done at the expense of the tax payers and the Social Security Board's funds have been used over and over again.

Since the acquisition of BEL and BTL, BTL has become the cash cow for the UDP government. In addition to the fact that the UDP has not been able to secure international funding, the acquisition of the utility companies BEL and BTL has increased our national debt. With the massive reduction in the direct foreign investment, the economy in is a terrible state.

The Prime Minister, despite the fact that his government in the past few years has shrunk the economy, has no plan as to how they will 1) take us out of the economic mess or 2) at least stimulate economic activity. And now the prime minister has the audacity to come back to the Belizean people to ask for a new mandate?

We need to be very careful when we got to the polls. Within the past few weeks the prime minister used 2.79 million dollars of the government funds for his party's election campaign, adding more to our national debt. With a government that has proven time and time again that they are unable to manage the nation's economy a second term for the UDP government will be eminent economic disaster and even the possibility of devaluation.

If the UDP should win we will have to anticipate radical increases in taxes which the UDP have been known to do in the past and mass retrenchment which the UDP has also been known to have done in the past. It is now no coincidence that every time the UDP wins an election they are a one-term government because every time they are given the opportunity to govern they have failed the Belizean people.

Just my Impartial View.

ultimately back away from its leader's campaign rhetoric, the injection of the superbond into the campaign follows increased policy unpredictability (including the nationalizations of Belize's main electricity and telecom companies in the last two years) and raises questions about the political commitment to timely debt service," S&P observed.

Barrow refuses to deal realistically and honestly with the repercussions and implications of the nationalized BTL and BEL on our economy while our creditors, on the other hand, are not impressed with his rhetoric.

S&P concludes its release by reiterating their chagrin about the Bar-

row administration's attitude saying that, "an upgrade would most likely result from greater predictability about **the political willingness to service debt** and improved financing prospects. These would likely stem from an improved growth and investment outlook.

The departure of Mark Espot and Cordel Hyde is hardly the news. Personally I will never believe that their support of the nationalization of the utilities was in the best interest of the Belizean people at a time when we could not afford to have them. No, I am not crying for their loss, finally the PUP is getting a chance to exhale, heal and move on.

BLUE NOTES: An economy in crisis

An unemployment rate of over 23%, a poverty rate of over 40% and businesses right across the industrial and distribution sector are either closing down voluntarily or going into forced receivership, foreign direct investment plummeted to just about 15% of where it was in the year 2008, commercial banks awash in liquidity for want of confidence to invest, and now our sovereign credit rating downgraded for the second time in two months - this must be an economy in crisis. And what is most despairing there is no acknowledgement coming from the government and therefore no plan for resuscitation. The irony of it is the Government is blaming the Superbond and the past administration, but for what, because it is denying anything is wrong with the economy. In effect it is saying despite the misery indices all is well thus trying to paper over the economic problems with substantial giveaways in the hope of creating an illusion of normalcy at least for the election. Who is really to blame?

In every household a family must be able to earn a certain level of income to meet at least its basic needs and some simplified wants.

The goal is to increase income at least to live at a middle class standard and at the same time create opportunities for their children to empower themselves likewise and enjoy even higher standards of life than their parents. That is the virtuous cycle of our economic life. But the households cannot do it alone. They need the other two partners in the economy - the private sector and the public sector. They all need each other. It is the "Social Partnership" that will create the economic synergy necessary to float all boats.

In 1998 the PUP came to office on a very meritorious reform agenda to modernize the public sector and create a welcoming "investment climate" to grow the economy. To create such an unprecedented enabling environment in a relatively short time demanded unprecedented large borrowing by the government. Substantial capital investment were needed for the various sectors in the public domain: building and upliftment of civil infrastructure such as a network of paved roads with bridges across the country, expansion of electricity, telecommunication and water supply, enhanced human capital through universal access to quality education and health care, strengthening of the legal system to ensure property rights and enforcement of con-

tracts, the enhancement of fiscal incentives through a framework of commercial and export processing zones, and a historical provisioning of investment capital for the private sector in agriculture, tourism, small businesses, health tourism, transportation, housing, tertiary education, etc. All this was underpinned by a reasonable measure of political stability and the rule of law.

Unfortunately, there were some pitfalls. There were pockets of fiscal irresponsibility. The debt was becoming unsustainable. The Government had to change course. And change they did. The record shows that their adjustment strategy was exemplary. They remedied the wrong and preserved the welcoming "investment climate" to continue to build on in furtherance of economic growth. This was evidenced by an IMF 2006 Report "The Executive Directors (of IMF) welcomed the progress the authorities (GOB) have made in addressing Belize's serious macroeconomic imbalances in the context of a home-grown adjustment strategy. A significant fiscal correction has been achieved in FY 2005/06."

It continued in a December 13, 2007 report: "the substantial debt relief granted by private creditors earlier this year has opened the way for a reduction in Belize's vul-

nerabilities." Spain only recently credited Belize's debt restructuring as one of the most successful. The table was set.

The UDP grasped the opportunity. They exaggerated and propagandized. They built their campaign on a platform of corruption. Their team had no merits of their own to rise on. They had to rise by pulling down. They succeeded in convincing the voters that they were for ZERO TOLERANCE when it comes to corruption, that they were an embodiment of righteousness and that they were the very essence of humility. They succeeded at the polls.

If one were to read the testimony of the Hon. Marcel Cardona former member of the ruling UDP, you would agree with Mr. Roberts when he wrote that open letter to the press. He said he made the mistake that many other voters made. HE VOTED AGAINST THE PUP BUT NEVER STOPPED TO THINK WHAT HE WAS VOTING FOR.

This country is in a state of economic paralysis and fear. The antidote, the cure, to such paralysis is hope and courage: defiant, resilient, persistent hope and courage, no matter what the odds against us may be. March 7th can be the beginning of restoration.

SOLUTIONS
not promises

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with TEAM 11

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

Karen Bodden
for Mayor

VOTE
PUP

FINANCIAL SENSE

College Bound? Then Money Matters



By Judy M. McCutcheon

You are in your late teens heading into your twenty somethings and looking to fly the coop. You may have already decided what college you will be attending and what you will be majoring in; you may have even hooked up with some of your "homies" and you have it all figured out how things are going to be for the next four years of your life. If you have your major "down pat," then kudos to you, I am still trying to figure out mine. You are determined to have as much fun as you possibly can and get some study in sideways. You will work at the school canteen - no scratch that - your parents will be sending you the money you need to take care of all your needs and then some.

Parents - you are probably dreading the day when your baby will actually leave home and I can imagine how your heart must be breaking; fear not because I am sure that you would have given them a solid foundation. The Bible states that as parents and guardians we should train up our kids in the way that they should grow so when they are older, they will not depart from that training. Now, just trust that you did an exemplary job. Before sending them off though, you need to ensure that they have the financial wherewithal to get them through the next four years and beyond. How can you get your children prepared for all the financial and money management responsibilities that they will have to deal with while they pursue their dreams?

You can begin the discussion by talking with them about your expectations for how they should prioritize their finances and handle their expenses while in college. Let's look at a few pointers to get that discus-

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.

sion started.

- Protect their personal information - in this age of identity theft, this could be a valuable lesson for all of us. Teach your kids the importance of an effective filing system keeping all their relevant documents in one safe place, to assist them in paying their bills and meeting their financial deadlines in a timely fashion.

- Budget, Budget, Budget - reinforce discipline and hone lifelong financial skills by encouraging your kids to develop strategies and practice healthy budgeting habits to take them through their college years. Help them to understand the impor-

tance of budgeting for the unexpected; it might be prudent for them to have a set monthly spending limit.

- Credit Rating - a favourable credit rating is important for your child's financial future; encourage them to cultivate a strong and desirable credit history. Let them know the importance of paying off their credit card monthly to avoid paying late fees and penalty, this will serve them well in the long run.

- Bank Account - they should have already been introduced to the prudence of having a bank account. If this is not the case, now is the time for them to learn the role of a bank account in money management. They should know about the pit falls of having an overdraft facility (unless it is in an absolute emergency), and more than anything else to avoid writing bad cheques.

Having this discussion with your children as they set sail for college is significantly important, as it provides them with a solid foundation for making financially sound decisions. If you don't engage them now, you can end up with "a monkey on your back."

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Former UDP Area Representative

Marcel Cardona

lashes out at the UDP



The following is excerpted from a presentation by Marcel Cardona on Wednesday, February 8, 2012 at a press conference in Belize City:

I thank you ladies and gentlemen for having accepted our invitation and taken the time out to be present with us this afternoon. A special thank you to all members of the media, as well as members of my family, and my friends, supporters and sympathizers, present with us today.

And I say "US," because we do have members of our ORANGE WALK EAST UPLIFTMENT COMMITTEE, which are those members of the former UDP Orange Walk East Committee and "Independent Thinkers," who have remained loyal to the duly elected Orange Walk East Area Representative, in spite of the numerous attempts by the UDP Party to intimidate, coerce, and punish all those who have chosen to associate in some form or another with the DISSIDENT or NON-CONFORMIST duly elected Orange Walk East Area Representative.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Some of the Various Forms of INTIMIDATION, COERCION and PUNISHMENT applied or implemented by Prime Minister Dean Barrow and his UDP Government during his current "4-YEAR REIGN OF TERROR, INTIMIDATION, OPPRESSION and VICTIMIZATION" upon the good people of the Orange Walk East Constituency and the rest of the country of Belize, have IN-

CLUDED, but are not limited to the following:

threats by the UDP to the people, of losing their jobs in the public service, or work places where government exercises a high level of influence and control, or threats of persons desirous of becoming employed not being given the opportunity of becoming gainfully employed at a time when unemployment in our country stands at an all-time high of 24% or almost 1 out of every 4 able-bodied members of the work force, if they refuse to follow the dictates of the UDP leadership and UDP Government;

threats by the UDP to the people, of losing their leases, or having their leases cancelled, over their parcel(s) of land, or threats of people not being given or issued their much awaited or much desired leases over their much-needed parcel(s) of land, if they refuse to follow the dictates of the UDP leadership and UDP Government;

threats by the UDP to the people, of having their private property taken away by the UDP Leaders in Government, exercising the Government's inherent power to COMPULSORILY ACQUIRE PRIVATE PROPERTY for a PUBLIC PURPOSE, if they refuse to follow the dictates of the UDP leadership and UDP Government;

threats by the UDP to the people, of the cancellation of their existing contracts, or the non-award, refusal, or rejection of the people's tenders or

bids for contracts, whether they be for road building contracts, construction contracts, supplies contracts, service contracts, or otherwise, if they refuse to follow the dictates of the UDP leadership and UDP Government;

threats by the UDP to business persons or business entities (big, medium-sized, and small businesses) being unjustly targeted, harassed, and intimidated through bureaucratic means, by the members of the Customs Department, Sales Tax Department, Police Department, Health Department, Department of Bureau Standards & Supplies Control, BAHA, Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries, Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environment, the Department of the Environment, and other government agencies or instrumentalities, thus threatening their very survival, their very livelihood, and ability to put food on the table for themselves, their families, and their workers, if they refuse to follow the dictates of the UDP leadership, if they refuse to follow the dictates of the UDP leadership and UDP Government;

threats by the UDP to those persons over the age of 65, of losing their non-contributory pensions of \$100 per month with the Social Security Board, or not being granted their non-contributory pensions by the Social Security Board, if they refuse to follow the dictates of the UDP leadership and UDP Government;

threats by the UDP to those persons, of being denied the seemingly now necessary governmental approval for their applications for Belizean Permanent Residence Status and even Belizean Nationality to be promptly processed by the Department of Immigration and Nationality, if they refuse to follow the dictates of the UDP leadership and UDP Government;

threats by the UDP to the needy students, of being denied their access to scholarships and student aid funding from the Ministry of Education, needed in order to allow them to achieve their academic goals in life, if they refuse to follow the dictates of the UDP leadership and UDP Government;

threats by the UDP to persons suffering from serious illnesses such as renal failure or

cancer, of being denied special assistance from the Ministry of Health with their medical expenses, especially in cases where such medical care and attention is expensive and out of the reach of the pockets of most poor and struggling Belizean families, if they refuse to follow the dictates of the UDP leadership and UDP Government;

threats by the UDP to persons, of being denied access to much-needed housing assistance and other forms of governmental support and assistance to the Belizean community, especially the less fortunate and more economically challenged citizens, if they refuse to follow the dictates of the UDP leadership and UDP Government;

threats by the UDP to persons, of being denied any form of governmental support, assistance, or benefit, without proper justification or without good reason, if they refuse to follow the dictates of the UDP leadership and UDP Government.

In March of 2003, immediately following the UDP's second resounding electoral loss to the PUP, I was invited by the then Leader of the Opposition and now Prime Minister Dean Oliver Barrow, to join him in his quest to bring betterment, progress and development to the good people of Belize, where corruption would have been a thing of the past, and honest leadership in a government of the people, by the people for the people, and which always listens to the people, would have become the *modus operandi* [mode or manner of operating] of the UDP. The Leader of the Opposition and now Prime Minister Dean Oliver Barrow challenged me to become part of the positive change which was so desperately needed in our country, to bring good governance, greater transparency and accountability in all public transactions. He challenged me to help to rebuild, reform the United Democratic Party, which would have become the vehicle to bring about all these positive changes in the Government and by extension the Belizean society.

Perhaps being young and naïve at the time, I believed the then Leader of the Opposition and now Prime Minister Dean Oliver Barrow, and placed my full trust and confidence in him and the ideals which he espoused.

I, as I verily believe most Belizeans at the time, particularly believed him since during the years 2003-2008, he started to display a social conscience during his term as Leader of the Opposition, and started to legally represent and defend outside and before the Courts of Belize, the poor, defenceless, the civil society, and community-based organizations, such as Nera Roches, the

Maya Alliance of the South, the Trade Union Congress of Belize, and the Association of Concerned Belizean (ACB), against attacks by or abuses by the then Government and other powerful entities of the day, such as the Roman Catholic Diocese of Belize.

It was therefore not difficult to believe the then Leader of the Opposition and now Prime Minister Dean Oliver Barrow when he famously announced to the nation of Belize, his commitment to the Belizean Public to maintain a "ZERO-TOLERANCE TOWARDS CORRUPTION" POLICY.

In the words of the then Leader of the Opposition and now Prime Minister Dean Oliver Barrow:

Meaning of "CORRUPTION" by Dean Oliver Barrow (D.O.B.): "THE PROBLEM with this Government is the FACT of their UNDILUTED CORRUPTION. PROMISES have been MADE by them that THEY HAVE NO INTENTION OF KEEPING. But I (Dean Barrow) tell you ANY UDP GOVERNMENT that I lead WILL NEVER BE ENGAGED IN CORRUPTION. As soon as it rears its ugly head, I personally will cut it off. And I will tell you I will sharpen a special machete with blades on two sides so that every time it springs up 'right so', I will chop it off. And IF IT MEANS THE GOVERNMENT HAS TO FALL, THEN SO BE IT! Let the consequences be damned, the people of this country deserve better, and I am determined to give them better!" - Hon. Dean Oliver Barrow, Belize's 4th Prime Minister - November 18, 2004, at a Town Meeting, during the crisis created following the discovery of the former PUP Government's financing of the private debts of Universal Health Services and the subsequent public outrage and series of Public Demonstrations that followed in Belmopan.

But the critical question is has he kept his promise or commitment to the Belizean Public? On the issue of what exactly is the official definition or commonly accepted definition of the term "CORRUPTION," we learn from Wikipedia that:

MEANING OF POLITICAL CORRUPTION by Wikipedia:

"POLITICAL CORRUPTION is the use of legislated powers by government officials for illegitimate private gain.... An illegal act by an officeholder constitutes political corruption only if the act is directly related to their official duties, is done under color of law or involves trading in influence."

"FORMS OF CORRUPTION: vary, but include (i) BRIBERY, (ii) EXTORTION, (iii) CRONYISM, (iv) NEPOTISM, (v) PATRONAGE, (vi) GRAFT, and (vii) EMBEZZLEMENT. While corruption may FACILITATE criminal enterprise such as (viii) DRUG TRAFFICKING, (ix) MONEY LAUNDERING, and (x) HUMAN TRAFFICKING, it is not restricted to these activities."

SO: Does the Honourable Prime Minister Dean Barrow live up to his commitment to the people of Belize, of being the media poster boy's "Mr. Zero Tolerance to CORRUPTION?"

Is the self-proclaimed Anti-Corrupt UDP Government of Belize, currently practicing or involved in DIFFERENT FORMS of CORRUPTION?

However, the Prime Minister Dean Oliver Barrow now boldly and quite conveniently asserts (as Prime Minister) that he does not believe that NEPOTISM is or refers to favouring one's family members or relatives.

AND So is awarding of millions upon millions of tax-payers dollars in legal services to the Prime Minister's ex-wife Lois Young Barrow and brother Dennis Barrow, when there are other equally competent, if not more competent local attorneys who could do the job, NOT a blatant act of "CORRUPTION" and "NEPOTISM" on the part of Mr. Anti-Corruption, Prime Minister Dean Barrow?

AND So is the awarding of lucrative oil contracts to the Prime Minister's nephew, Kimano Barrow, to allow him and his family to benefit from the oil bonanza in Belize, NOT another blatant act of "PUBLIC CORRUPTION" and "NEPOTISM" on the part of Mr. Anti-Corruption, Prime Minister Dean Barrow?

AND So is the appointing of the Prime Minister's Ex-wife Lois Young Barrow and his 27-year old son, Anwar Barrow to the lucrative BTL Board of Directors, following BTL's takeover by the Government of Belize in 2009, NOT another blatant act of "PUBLIC CORRUPTION" and "NEPOTISM" on the part of Mr. Anti-Corruption, Prime Minister Dean Barrow?

AND So is the appointing of the Prime Minister's 27-year old son, Anwar Barrow as a temporary SENATOR or member of the Belize Senate, NOT another blatant act of "PUBLIC CORRUPTION" and "NEPOTISM" on the part of Mr. Anti-Corruption, Prime Minister Dean Barrow?

AND So is the awarding of the lucrative National Boledo and Lottery Contract to a joint venture business between Brad's and the Prime Minister's 27-year old son, Anwar Barrow, NOT another blatant act of "PUBLIC CORRUPTION" and "NEPOTISM" on the part of Mr. Anti-Corruption, Prime Minister Dean Barrow?

AND So is the retention and rewarding of his close friend, confidant, and close relative or family member of Prime Minister Dean Barrow, being the current NICH President, following the discovery of what may well be classified as her "secret sweetheart deal" with a private investor over an exclusive and lucrative 10-year contract renewable for or to another 10 years, over rights over the Nohoch Che' En Archaeological Site at Cave's Branch, NOT another blatant act of "PUBLIC CORRUPTION" and "NEPOTISM" on the part of Mr. Anti-Corruption, Prime Minister Dean Barrow?

AND So is the hundreds of thousands, and perhaps millions of dollars

in earnings or legal fees provided to the Prime Minister's own Law Firm, Barrow & Williams, by the several oil companies which have been granted oil concessions to operate within Belize, not another blatant form or act of "PUBLIC CORRUPTION", or "BRIBERY in exchange for PATRONAGE" on the part of Mr. Anti-Corruption, Prime Minister Dean Barrow?

AND So is the award of a limited number of lucrative logging licences to exploit or to extract valuable mahogany, timber, hardwoods, and other exotic lumber, from the previously untouched 22,000 acre Freshwater Creek Forest Reserve, to close relatives (including nephews) and special friends (such as his driver, his special consultants and political advisors, and the wealthy UDP Candidate in Orange Walk East) of the Deputy Prime Minister Gaspar Vega, NOT another blatant act of "PUBLIC CORRUPTION" and "NEPOTISM" on the part of this Dean Barrow Administration?

AND So is Deputy Prime Minister Gaspar Vega's family's or his close relatives' monopoly over the Rosewood logging and rosewood lumber exportation business in Toledo, NOT another blatant act of "PUBLIC CORRUPTION" and "NEPOTISM" on the part of this Dean Barrow Administration?

AND So is the unethical and artificial manipulation of the supply of imported or foreign vegetables and fruits, especially onions, tomatoes, potatoes, etc., by a newly formed cartel comprising of the Minister of Agriculture, the UDP Ministerial Cayo Caucus, and the Deputy Prime Minister and his brother, in order to derive SCANDALOUS and OBSCENE PROFITS at the cost of the poor Belizean Consumer, NOT another blatant act of "PUBLIC CORRUPTION" and "NEPOTISM" on the part of this Dean Barrow Administration?

AND So is unethical monopoly granted to the Deputy Prime Minister's Brother from Benque, over the importation of processed ground corn or Mazeca (to make tortillas) in order to artificially fix the local prices and so derive SCANDALOUS and OBSCENE PROFITS at the cost of the poor Belizean Consumer, NOT another blatant act of "PUBLIC CORRUPTION", "NEPOTISM", and "HUSTLING" on the part of this Dean Barrow Administration?

AND if we explore the issue of CRONYISM:

"Cronyism is PARTIALITY, BIAS or FAVORITISM towards long-standing friends, especially by appointing them to positions of authority, regardless of their qualifications. Hence, cronyism is contrary in practice and principle to meritocracy. ... Cronyism exists when the Appointer and the Beneficiary are in social contact; often, the Appointer is inadequate to hold his or her own job or position of authority, and for this reason the Appointer appoints individuals who will NOT try to weaken him or her, or express views contrary to those of the Appointer. Politically, "cronyism" is derogatorily used."

...then the HUSTLING and PUB-

LIC CORRUPTION becomes even more apparent.

Wasn't it another blatant act of "PUBLIC CORRUPTION" and "CRONYISM" to the UDP Government to have awarded the multi-million dollar contract to build a WALL for the future Marion Jones Stadium to its UDP Crony and UDP Albert Constituency Standard Bearer? And it begs the question: When you shall construct your home or building, do you first construct a fancy and expensive fence, or do you first construct the shelter over your head or the building? This is why I had to describe the Prime Minister and his cadre of Cabinet Ministers as CORRUPT and INCOMPETENT. IMAGINE: After 4 years, and after both the Taiwanese and Venezuelan Grants had already been delivered to the Belize Government, the Belize Government has not even began construction of the much talked about Marion Jones Sporting Complex? IMAGINE? And that is ALL that the Belizean Public have been able to do under this UDP Government, which has TOTALLY FAILED to DELIVER on the simplest of its Manifesto Promises to the Belizean Public... make life better for ALL Belizeans, and not just the Prime Minister and his family and the Ministers and their families, but ALL Belizeans!

And finally, there is the BROADCASTER REPORT, which many members of the media have for some reason or the other deliberately chosen to disregard or not to publicly comment upon, whether for fear of reprisals or persecution, or in hopes of currying favour with those sitting Ministers of the outgoing UDP Cabinet, that are singled out in the Broadster Report, for their participation or complicity in various acts of public corruption, contraband and even drug-trafficking or the narco-trade.

Perhaps this is the reason why ACCESS TO MONIES or MILLIONS UPON MILLIONS OF DOLLARS OF CAMPAIGN FINANCING is seemingly not a problem for the current UDP Government, which is seemingly on a campaign of sweetening the wounds of the worse of times which the Belizean people have ever experienced!

And let us therefore not be surprised that a UDP Government which has so fabulously or so magnificently failed the Belizean public in keeping it campaign promises of helping to materialize the possibilities of a better life, at a time when it had asked the Belizean Public during the 2008 General Election campaign, to simply "IMAGINE THE POSSIBILITIES"... under a new UDP Government led by Dean Barrow, is now desperately trying to do all within its power to hold on to power.

So indeed, let us beware of and not allow any last minute Christmas giveaways, and other pre-election giveaways distract our focus from the real or principal question: HAS THIS CURRENT UDP GOVERNMENT made good on its promise to make life better to each and every Belizean citizen? Are we better off today, than we were in before the February 7, 2008 General Elections? That is indeed the question...

The Independent POLITICS

BELIZE: ECONOMIC SUICIDE

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.)

Belize has been done a great disservice by both parties. As both parties have been so consumed with private agendas the needs of the country have been left in the dirt. We have only had reactive governments. They react to whatever is happening at the moment and totally lose sight of the big picture. Certainly, they pay lip service to the concept of the greater good while continuing their quest for money and power. They have defaulted on their primary responsibility as leaders, which is planning for the future of the country.

The lack of planning and incon-



sistency of government policies have contributed greatly to our economic disaster. Neither party has ever had a comprehensive development plan and is totally dependent on world economic trends. Each and every industry is underdeveloped and no thought is given to the maximization of our re-

sources or the potential relationships of the industries to each other.

For centuries Belize has been pillaged of its natural resources without much benefit to the country. First it was the logwood that was removed followed by the exploitation of mahogany and the marine resources. Now there is no logwood and poor planning and incursions by the Guatemalans have depleted the mahogany and the fishing industry is on the ropes. Rosewood is moving rapidly down the same path.

We are still stripping our country of assets at a time when we are at an economic crossroads. The decisions we make now will have a big influence on our future as a nation. A primary ingredient in economic activity is the availability of raw materials to produce finished goods for sale. Historically we have sold our raw materials to others who then add value by processing and manufacturing and make much more profit from our raw materials than we do ourselves. All the rosewood that we are so concerned about is shipped abroad where others turn it into fine furniture that is sold for top dollar while we sell it for a pittance. Most often the exporters of the raw materials are by foreign corporations who are quite willing for us to sell them our future for pennies on the dollar and indeed these raw materials are our future. When they are gone what is left except young people without work?

Our precious lobster is sold by the ton with no thought being given to making the most of this resource. Our sugar is of such low quality that

it is sold to others who then re-refine it to make a better product and higher profit. Petroleum is yet another example of the rapid depletion of our resources without benefit being derived by the citizens of Belize. Xate leaves and other rainforest products are stolen or exported without much benefit to the country. Fish is being exported as a raw material to others who will process it and make the money that could be ours if we had meaningful economic strategies in place.

We must develop industries based upon our raw materials with every effort being made to conserve and maximize the value of these resources. We should be adding value to raw materials before exporting them. No rosewood should be exported until it has been turned into a finished product, fine furniture being one such product. Our lobster could be packaged in retail size and sold to major food chains. We could have a Xate and rain forest ornamentals industry. We could process our fish and then sell to Jamaica and abroad. We could produce ISO sugar that could be used to fuel a fruit beverages industry.

We have the potential to have a stand-alone economy that has interlocking industries that add value to our existing resources resulting in more foreign exchange by increasing the value of our exports. Through development of these types of industries we can create jobs and generate wealth using only the resources we have at hand without borrowing one copper.

San Pedro Politics

Politics is in the forefront in San Pedro as the election speeds toward us like a freight train. Banners and posters adorn most lampposts with three Mayoral candidates, fourteen Town Councilor candidates, and four Area Representative candidates vying for space.

The San Pedro Sun and Reef Radio/TV have announced the first ever Area Representative Candidate Debate to be held in Belize. It will be Wednesday 15 February at 7pm in San Pedro.

Monday night on Decision 2012 Bobby Lopez announced his candidacy for Area Representative Belize Rural South as Standard Bearer for the V.I.P. Mr. Lopez resides in Belmopan and owns Hummingbird Furniture that has an outlet in San Pedro where he also maintains a residence. Mr. Lopez is the Chairman of the V.I.P. and Leader of the fledgling Belize Unity Alliance that he conceived over a year ago.

Mel Paz, Independent candidate for Mayor of San Pedro and Marcel Bedran, candidate for Area Representative Cayo North Division, accompanied Mr. Lopez. Mr. Bedran spoke at length about the problems of Cayo North and how we all had the same kinds of problems associated with the red/blue system and how the people wanted a change. He strongly endorsed Bobby for the Area Representa-

tive position.

Ms Paz also endorsed Mr. Lopez and complained that the Party teams were telling voters that a split ballot would not count and they must vote straight seven for their vote to count. Of course this not true and everyone has the right to vote for whomsoever he or she chooses and splitting your vote does not ruin your ballot, it will be counted x by x.

Hector Silva, ex PUP Minister, called in and said how much he liked Bobby and expected him to carry on in the traditions of George Price and emphatically endorsed Mr. Lopez in the contest for Area Representative.

Mr. Lopez spoke at length of the history of the V.I.P. in Belmopan and how his son had been victimized in school because of Bobby's political positions and how he had used it as a learning experience for his son. He spoke of when he founded his business and his intentions of retiring in San Pedro and handing over the business in Belmopan to his son.

Mr. Lopez stated that he had decided to enter the race because there were only two candidates running for Area Representative in San Pedro and he believed the people needed another choice rather



(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.)

Two year deficit...was reported by the San Pedro Town Council. The amounts are in question as the report was not audited and did not seem to add up. The two year deficit was reported to be in excess \$800,000. Lame duck Mayor Elsa Paz continues erecting monuments around town commemorating the accomplishments of her administration while not explaining the deficit. There was also no mention of her personal vehicle which she reportedly sold to the Town Council for the same price she paid for it two years

previously. This was the first report of her administration even though the law calls for quarterly reports. The town awaits a new mayor and promises of a forensic audit.

North Ambergris Caye...has had another rash of burglaries. The remoteness of the area makes police protection and response very difficult with an understaffed and under equipped police force.

Politics...dominated San Pedro life this week with a carnival atmosphere on the streets with all the colorful banners.

than red or blue. Mr. Lopez referred to the V.I.P. as being part of the Independent Movement, which is distinctly different from the Third Party Movement, and stated that as Leader of the B.U.A. he would be visiting all the constituencies country-wide campaigning for the B.U.A. slate. He extolled the accomplishments of the V.I.P. and offered himself to serve the people of San Pedro and Caye Caulker.

Mr. Lopez stated that he had eight

pages of notes of recommendations for San Pedro. Job creation was mentioned with focus on the promotion of San Pedro as a tourist destination of all kinds including eco tourism and cruise tourism.

The date for the next edition of Decision 2012 will be announced soon but will be after the live Area Rep debate to be held Wednesday, 15 February 2012 at 7pm.

State Of The Arts:

PLACENCIA SIDEWALK ART FESTIVAL 2012



By Katie Usher

Last year I had the great fortune of attending, for the very first time, the Placencia Sidewalk Art Festival. I really enjoyed the art, friendly faces and warm hospitality of the beautiful village on the peninsula. The sidewalk was literally lined with jewelry stalls, handmade soap, paintings, carvings, and of course good home-cooked food. The festival also had a wide array of local performances by musicians from Placencia and beyond.

On the second day of the festival, though it rained off and on, the activities continued.

I was really impressed with a stall by the Anglican Primary school. The teachers of that particular school had two long benches; on these benches were paper, glitters, crayons and other material so that children who visited the festival could make Valentine's Day cards for their parents. From the tent which covered the long benches, radiated laughter and creativity as children sheltered from the light drizzle and painted the cutest Valentine's creations I have yet seen. The teachers also sold calendars which the students had made in art class in an effort to raise funds for the school.

I revisited Placencia this past weekend and was pleased to see that great preparations are being made for the Ninth Annual Placencia Sidewalk Art Festival. This year the festival chairperson is Ms. Aline Habib who is collaborating closely with the Belize Tourism Industry Association's Placencia Chapter.

I asked Ms. Jolie Pollard, executive director of the BTIA Placencia Chapter, and Ms. Aline Habib to give me an idea of what to look forward to at this year's festival.

I asked Jolie and Aline to tell me what will be the most exciting thing planned for the PSAF this year.

"The most exciting thing planned is the FUSION of so many different mediums of art. This year, we have the most 'comprehensive' lineup of artists ever, encompassing music, paintings, dance, jewelry, poetry, tattooing, carvings, and lots more! We have increased our efforts to promote the performing arts, and have introduced a new segment called "Art After Dark" starting at 6 p.m. on Saturday, which will feature belly dancing, fire dancing and some big performances. Music will be taking place through the weekend. The selection is very diverse and representative of our colorful Peninsula community, and we have something for everyone on three different stages. There will be a Kids Tent, filled with activities and arts materials for the children to get inspired. Also, we are introducing our very first Sidewalk Chalk Contest, where contestants will be given a 'square' on the sidewalk, transforming a portion of our

ribbon of concrete into a work of art. We also have live poetry and classical guitar at our new 'unplugged' stage," responded the organizers.

Pollard and Habib said that artists should definitely take a trip to Placencia because it is a perfect opportunity to network. They elaborated: "Placencia is the hot destination in Belize right now. Whether an artist is coming down to sell his art, promote his music, or simply scope out the scene, the PSAF is the perfect place. Exhibiting artists will not only benefit from a great income opportunity, but will also get exposure and make contacts that will last a lifetime. We have international visitors who plan their trip around this festival, as well as Belizeans from all over the country, making this the ideal occasion for artists who are looking to share their work with the world."

I remember meeting very interesting people last year and delighting in artwork from all over Belize and the world.

Though the festival highlights the best cultural production to be found in Belize, local and international visitors are encouraged to visit and enjoy the many attractions and activities which Placencia has to offer.

"You can expect to see a busy Placencia with amazing restaurants ready to serve you a very fun night life at the local bars... Of course, there's the beautiful beach readily accessible from the sidewalk if you want to take a splash or just lay out on the sand. And, if you'd like to explore the beautiful reef or nearby jungle, you can arrange a trip with a local tour operator," suggested the young organizers.

Aline and Jolie say "We really hope to make this a memorable event for all participants and festival goers. We also want people to see that the Placencia Chapter of the BTIA is working very hard to promote all stakeholders in the tourism industry. We are determined to get Placencia on everyone's minds this year as the preferred vacation destination and believe that the Placencia Sidewalk Arts Festival is a great start!"

I really am excited about the planned performances by the likes of Tanya Carter, Bredda David and Emmeth Young just to name a few, also to seeing all the fabulous art work and artists at the festival. If you have not yet made plans for the weekend, or even if you have, you may want to consider taking a trip down south to revel in art, music and the beautiful seaside in Placencia.

The Placencia Sidewalk Art Festival 2012 is scheduled for February 11 and 12 and promises to be very exciting.



CARIBBEAN NEWS

30-YEAR BATTLE PAYS DIVIDENDS FOR GRACEKENNEDY

Wednesday February 8,
2012

KINGSTON, Jamaica - After a 30-year battle to get into major super-market chains overseas, GraceKennedy is finally reaping success.

The popular Jamaican brand can now be found on the shelves of major super-market chains including Publix, Walmart and Target.

GraceKennedy also plans to expand the Caribbean brand to the US west coast, in particular California, with its Grace Coconut Water.

Group chief executive officer Don Wehby said recent findings indicate "that Hispanics in the US are very attracted to our products such as our sauces, juices and coconut water, so that is a market that we can say there is going to be good growth in the future."

He noted that informal surveys done by the 90-year-old conglomerate

showed that visitors to Jamaica sought out the Grace brand in Florida. "That is something we can really work on having the tourism industry being really an export sector where we can have our products aligned with our visitors here," he said.

To cater to this demand, Wehby said the company was seeking to appoint a distributor to promote the GraceKennedy brand as there are plans to make a significant investment to spread the company's wings even further afield.



Barbados police fight crime with technology

Thursday February 3,
2012

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados - Victims of crimes in Barbados can soon identify their attackers without having to come face to face with them.

And charges of police

brutality during interrogation will also be harder to prove as the Royal Barbados Police Force prepares to roll out new state-of-the-art technology to record such proceedings.

This will all be possible as police implement devices such as the Cardinal Peak CaseCracker and the Promat system, both designed to bring a higher level of transparency to the interviewing of suspects by lawmen, and the identification of suspects.

And the country's Attorney General, Adriel Brathwaite has promised that amendments to the legislative framework to govern its use will be in place within another six months.

He added that the equipment will be installed at five police stations initially, but noted the intention was to have all stations outfitted.

The Pro Mat system will allow police to show victims of crime photographs and videos of headshots to allow them to point out their attacker. It is mobile and can be transported to victims in hospital or those who are unable to go to a police station.

Mr Brathwaite explained that the Pro Mat system was fair and allowed police to provide eight individuals of similar build and characteristics to an accused person.

But he said there were still some kinks to be ironed out with the Pro Mat as it relates to getting people to volunteer their photographs. "We have one or two challenges from the point of view that not enough suites are readily available," the Attorney-General said.

As a result the new technology will only be available for serious crimes in the initial stages.

Meanwhile, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Oral Williams explained the CaseCracker involved the use of two cameras, both placed in one room, with one focused on the entire room and the other on the suspect. The interview of a suspect by police in the presence of their attorney is recorded.

"When the interview is finished you can play it back and see exactly what transpired," explained Mr Williams.

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Don't cry for Argentina:

"Caribbean countries should not be used to advance Argentina's ambitions."

By Sir Ronald Sanders

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados, (Thursday, February 9, 2012) - The national and regional interests of Commonwealth Caribbean countries would hardly be served by backing Argentina in its long-running dispute with Britain over the Falkland Islands.

An Associated Press (AP) report of a meeting of some Latin American and Caribbean leaders, under the umbrella of ALBA, cites Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez as confirming the support of all the ALBA countries for Argentina.

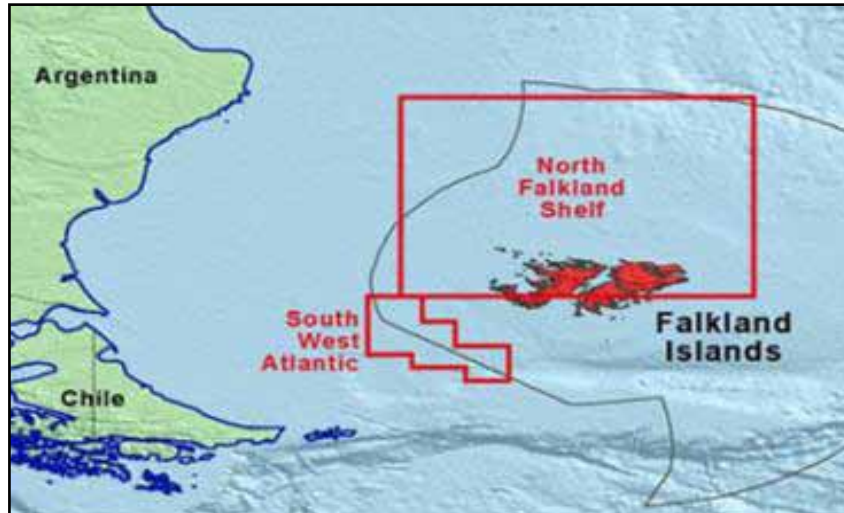
ALBA is a grouping initiated by the Venezuelan President and comprising eight nations – the larger Spanish-speaking states Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Cuba, and the three small Caribbean islands St Vincent and the Grenadines, Antigua and Barbuda, and Dominica.

According to reports by AP and other international news agencies, on February 4, the eight ALBA member governments are reported to have approved an agreement barring any boats flying Falkland Islands flags from docking in their ports.

Up to the time of writing this commentary, only one government has denied being party to such an agreement. In a statement on February 8, the Antigua and Barbuda government said that it "has never supported any call for the banning of flagships from any country in the region and therefore disassociates itself from any statement regarding the banning of ships carrying the flag of the Falklands (Malvinas) from entering our ports."

It has to be assumed that the two other Caribbean governments of St Vincent and the Grenadines and Dominica will adopt a similar position to the now public Antigua and Barbuda government stance. All three states are members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) which are obliged by treaty to co-ordinate their foreign policy positions. It would be both a contravention of their treaty obligations and a rebuff of other CARICOM states should leaders of the three countries make such a commitment without at least discussing the implications with their CARICOM partners.

A further worrying aspect of ALBA is a proposal that its members should join a defence pact by which the military of all of them would be called into action should any of them find itself in a conflict. In this regard, President Chavez's reported remark that "if it occurs to the British Empire to attack Argentina, Argentina won't be alone this time", is troubling, particularly as neither Britain nor Argentina has given any indication of such a prospect. Fortunately, none of the three Commonwealth Caribbean governments has confirmed any interest in joining



an ALBA military pact. If they did so without the agreement of their partners in CARICOM and the smaller Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, these two organisations would be fractured, probably irreparably.

There are many good reasons why Commonwealth Caribbean countries should not support Argentina in this dispute with Britain. First, the inhabitants of the Falklands have determined that they are British and wish to remain so. They have rejected the notion of being Argentinian. The right of self-determination, enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, is one that Commonwealth Caribbean countries have long upheld, and, indeed, is the basis on which each of them achieved their own political independence.

When Foreign Ministers of the 15-member countries of CARICOM and the Dominican Republic met Ministers of the British Government in January this year at the biennial UK-Caribbean Forum in Grenada, they collectively and rightly agreed: "To support the principle and the right to self-determination for all peoples, including the Falkland Islanders, recognising the historical importance of self-determination in the political development of the Caribbean, and its core status as an internationally agreed principle under the United Nations Charter".

A second good reason not to support Argentina is that the facts of British settlement and sovereignty over the Falklands are well established. It is important to appreciate that an existing UN resolution on the Falklands does no more than call for negotiations to find a peaceful settlement to the dispute over sovereignty. Where the problem arises is: if both countries claim sovereignty why would either of them want to negotiate over what they consider to be their legitimate right? In any event, Britain has exercised sovereignty over the Falklands since 1765 and, properly, if Argentina disputes such sovereignty, it should take the matter to the International Court of Justice for arbitration. Argentina has declined to do so, while Britain has indicated its willingness on several occasions.

Those are reasons of principle and law why Caribbean countries ought not to support Argentina in its claim for the

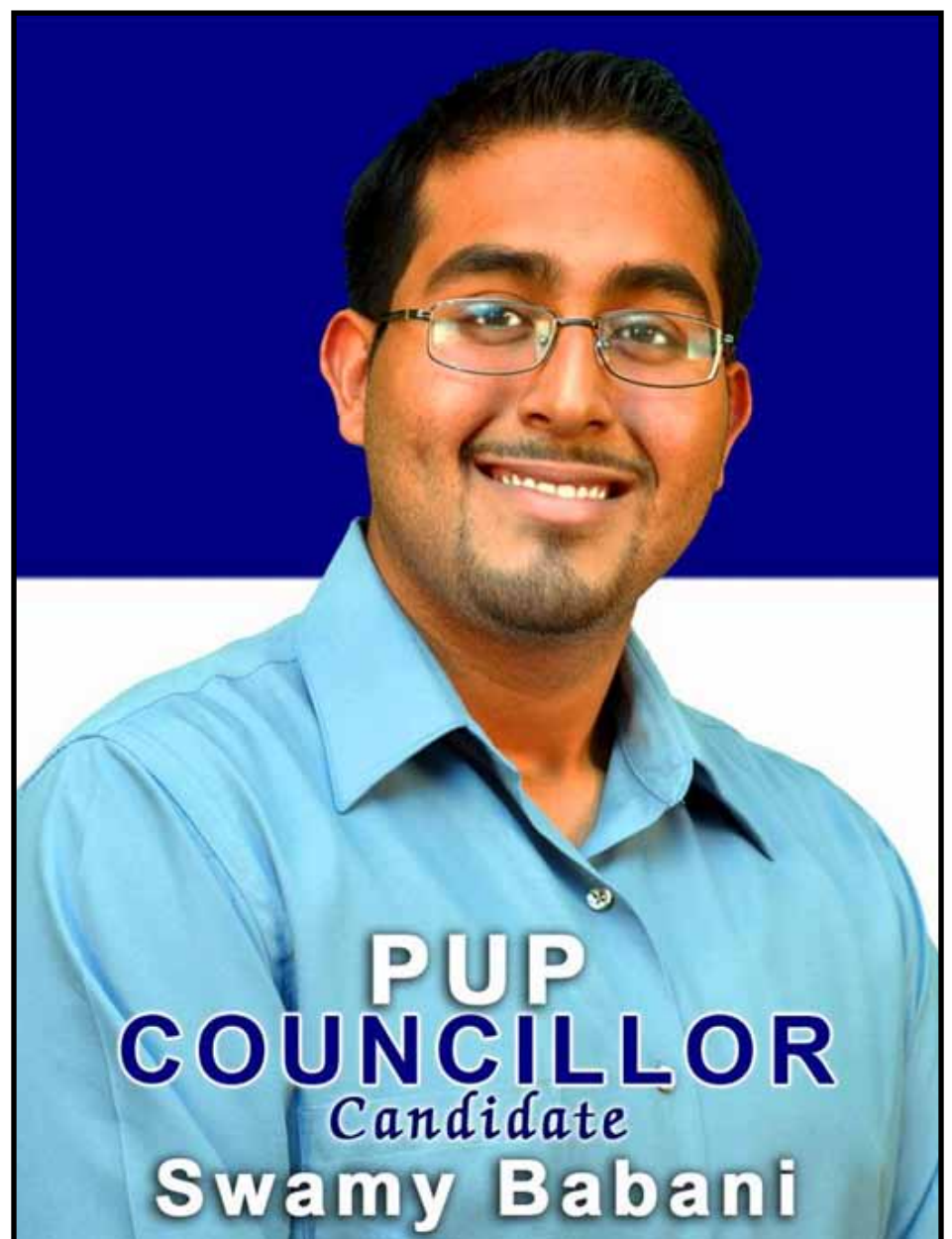
far bigger aid donor to the Caribbean than is Argentina, and British assistance is not only direct, it is also provided through the European Union, the Commonwealth and the Caribbean Development Bank; Caribbean tourism is far more reliant on British travellers than it is on Argentinians; a large number of Caribbean nationals live and work in Britain, few of them do so in Argentina; Caribbean students study, particularly for post-graduate work, in Britain, few if any study in Argentina; and the Commonwealth Caribbean countries share a history, culture, legal system and language with Britain that is of immense importance and benefit to them.

What is fuelling this latest Argentinian interest in the Falklands is plans announced by four British companies to search for oil around the Falklands. The explorers say they are targeting 8.3 billion barrels in the waters this year. But, Caribbean countries should not be used to advance Argentina's ambitions.

Argentina is a neighbouring country, and, as good neighbours, the Caribbean should urge it to take its case to the International Court of Justice if it believes it has a genuine argument for sovereignty over the Falklands, and, therefore the right to any oil that is found in the territorial waters of the islands. It's what the Caribbean would have to do in similar circumstances

Falklands. By themselves they are solid and overriding reasons.

But, if economic self-interest were also to play a part in national decision-making on this issue the following points are worth bearing in mind: Commonwealth Caribbean countries earn far more from exports to Britain than they do to Argentina; Britain is a



I am Swamy Babani, a candidate for the Belize City Council. I am a business man who brings innovative ideas. My compassion sincerely motivates me to make things better. I firmly believe that the city has the potential for small and micro businesses to succeed. As a member of your Belize City Council, we will create the environment for entrepreneurial development. In so doing, we can generate employment and improve the quality of life for the residents of Belize City. On March 7th, I ask you to vote for Swamy Babani and the P.U.P 11. Together we can rescue our beloved city.

The Sporting Life: They call him Marvelous: Marvin Ottley

By Marshall Nunez, Sr.

This week I had the pleasure of sitting with Marvin Ottley. He has had tremendous success in the sport of football as a player both locally and internationally, and as a coach, an administrator and now a tournament organizer. The 44 year old husband and father of 5, whose birthday is on Belize's Independence Day, characterizes himself as one who don't pull punches. He is a florist by profession and he told me "I have recently been reminded that it is my hands that have made me great." As a florist he's classified as having a green thumb and as a goal keeper for most of his career he was allowed to use his hands in the game of football. I take a deeper look into Marvin's football history.

Marvin grew up in the Lake Independence area, on Sarstoon Street. As a young boy he grew up emulating the then dominant Lake senior team Berger 404, who uses to train at Berger Field at the corner of Sarstoon and Vernon Streets. Marvin and his brother Dean were involved with the other young men in the Lake Independence area. You had the Jones brothers from Mopan Street, the offsprings of Christobal Mayen and Ricky Gongora from the Long Barracks, Burgess from Ebony Street, the McCauley's and Gregory Canton from Mayflower Street, the Clark brothers from Vernon Street and the White and Gill brothers from Boulevard. They used to play at the Kitty Cat Field, Berger field when they had the break, Chitos Field, Saint Martin's Field and Sec 2 field.

At the youth level Marvin played with Ford Tractor Parts, a youth team from the area that later became Cruel. The team dominated that level for a couple of years.

Marvin played primary school at Wesley Upper but never did play at the high school level, although he tried out with the Gwen Liz team. It was at age 16 when his attraction for goal keeping started. Marin told me that he had the fortune of meeting Danny Smith, who was playing football in Belize City but was from Santa Clara, Corozal. Danny started training him along with Steven Collins as goal keepers. Marvin described Danny as being masterful and crafty at training goal keepers.

Marvin was one of the first players from the south side to end up playing with a north side team. He played with Fanta at Second Division and then he joined Coke Milpros in the First Division. Marvin breakthrough as goal keeper came in a game where he was in goal in a 2-0 victory over the then Tactical Service Unit. He played 2 years with Milpros before the start of the semi-pro football league. Marvin ended up playing Corozal's La Victoria, Belize's first semi-pro champions, but got his international exposure with Milpros and San Joaquin at CONCACAF tournaments. According to Marvin he played over 40 international games. He was one of the first Belizean players to have gotten an offer to play internationally. This happened when he went with San Joaquin to play in Guatemala.

As a coach Marvin has coached at nearly every level. He led Gwen Liz to



their first high school championship and coached La Victoria at the semi-pro level. He won 4 semi-pro championships as the coach of Kulture Yabra.

He was also involved in the coaching of Grigamandala and FC Belize at the semi-pro level.

Marvin has organized various football competitions at different levels from youth to the top level. During his years working at the National Sports Council he was involved with organizing the primary school football competition. He has also headed the Belize District Football Association. He organized the Belize City Champions Cup that included the top teams in Belize City, a tournament that had the participation of 6 teams. He most recently organized the Belize Bank Cup which also had 6 teams. It featured a resurgence of the Old Road Team, which is a team comprised of players from the villages on the old Northern Highway.

He will be starting a Six-Aside competition in the next couple of weeks and he has plans to organize a Belize City semi-pro league.

Marvin told me that it brought chills over his body when he realized the level at which he was playing. He said "When I saw the assistant coach from Chile, a player who used to play for Morelia, whose penalty I stopped in a CONCACAF game, I realize that I was playing with the big of the biggest players in the region."

When I asked him how he feels about Deon McCauley he told me that that also gave him chills and that he is so proud of Deon. He also said that if Deon's opportunity doesn't work out in Croatia he has something in North Carolina, USA, which could be worked out for Deon and Ian Gaynair to play in the US Soccer League.

Marvin is still a competitive player and recently played with Creative Tiles in the just completed Over-40 competition. He believes that he still has at least 2 more years of Over-40 to play and he believes that one of those years he will finally get to play for a Lake I team.

Marvin believes that he has the capacity, experience and the qualification to successfully coach the Belize National Team, especially in the regional competitions.

His two sons Christian and Jael Ottley are both playing for FC Belize.

The Independent wishes Marvin Ottley and his wife Hilma Perez Ottley, Christian, Jael and the other 3 kids all the very best.

CAMPBELL CARES!



VOTE INDEPENDENT VOTE WILLIAM (MIKE) CAMPBELL FOR AREA REPRESENTATIVE

FOR BETTER GOVERNMENT:

- BRS should become the 7th District of Belize having all government offices and services located in San Pedro and receiving our share of each of the Ministry budgets.
- Redistrict BRS to become 2 constituencies giving more equal representation.
- Divide San Pedro into 6 wards with each ward electing a Town Councillor.
- Area Rep office should have departments to deal with all government issues. Immigration and work papers, Social Security problems, assistance for small businesses and business start up should be available at all times from the staff.
- Social Security accounts should be usable to pay hospital costs regardless of cause. Social Security should establish an unemployment assistance scheme to help good people who have lost their jobs. The Social Fund has about \$400 Million of workers money that is being misused.

FOR LAND REFORM:

- Everyone should have equal opportunity to get land. Any land that is available for sale must be advertised so all have an equal chance.
- Lots should be given only to those who need them. No government lots should be resold until something is built on the property. Party members get multiple lots that they hold for profit while others get nothing.
- There is no excuse for assigning the same lot twice or taking someone's lot to give to another.
- A new community should be developed in the Basil Jones area of North Ambergris Caye to allow our children to have a chance to make a future. There should be land available on North Ambergris Caye for agricultural use to help our economy by growing food.

FOR MORE JOBS:

- Establish Export Processing Zone for year around JOBS
- Open North Ambergris Caye for Agriculture and a new Town with International Airport.
- Revitalize tourism by promoting San Pedro/Caye Caulker as a separate GREEN destination, adding value to our product.
- Give Municipal works contracts to residents of San Pedro first.
- Duty Free Fuel for Tour Companies and Guides

FOR BETTER ROADS:

- Ministry of Works must establish a San Pedro office to engineer and execute road projects including San Mateo.
- Establish drains and culverts where necessary.
- Use modern soil stabilization techniques to give hard, non-polluting, dust free roads without paving. Sewer installations can be done later without heavy cost.
- North Ambergris Caye must have a properly engineered road with drainage.

FOR BETTER SCHOOLS:

- San Pedro needs a modern High School with all lab facilities and an expanded curriculum. The High School/ Education Center should also offer vocational training and technical education and courses in living skills, childcare and parenting.
- San Pedro needs at least one more primary school immediately.
- Schools must be free and mandatory through High School. Parents should only purchase uniforms and school supplies.

FOR BETTER POLICING:

- We must have well trained police officers that are well paid and are responsible to and are part of the community. They must have sufficient numbers and equipment and training to protect us properly.
- We must hire a Prosecuting Attorney who is a licensed attorney to help the police raise the conviction rate.

FOR BETTER HEALTH CARE:

- Immediately establish emergency evacuation at night by installing emergency runway lights at Municipal.
- Work toward 24/7 EMS with ambulance service then build a complete hospital.

FOR BETTER FIRE PROTECTION:

- Immediately install fire hydrants in all areas that are served by BWS at intervals so the trucks can refill or pump from the hydrant.
- Upgrade our equipment and training to cover future growth.
- Change building code so all homes can qualify for insurance

WE NEED A BETTER SAN PEDRO!

**VOTE MIKE CAMPBELL for
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602-1616 SAN JUAN**

Revisiting the Ninth Amendment:

The economics of nationalization

Taken from the ILO website

The proposed Ninth Constitutional Amendment, whether it is legally or constitutionally valid or not, must be looked at in the context of Belize's socio-economic realities. The Ninth Amendment seeks to accomplish one primary objective: to entrench nationalization of certain utilities – in particular, Belize Telemedia Limited (BTL) and Belize Electricity Limited (BEL). Concerned that such entrenchment may be the subject of a successful legal challenge under the basic structure doctrine applied by the Supreme Court in *Barry Bowen v Attorney General*,⁽¹⁾ the legislature has sought to place the entrenchment beyond all legal challenge in the courts. By doing so in such a broad and expansive manner, the amendment subverts constitutional supremacy and the separation of powers doctrine, and purports to assert parliamentary supremacy at the risk of undermining the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms.

But what of its primary objective, the entrenchment of the nationalization of utilities? While nationalization may be desirable from a protectionist approach, is this for the common good? Will nationalization of utilities produce wealth for the nation of Belize? At its economic core, will it result in a more efficient allocation of scarce resources? In other words, how does it benefit the Belizean people?

Nationalization is nothing more than the transfer of assets from private hands to government hands in exchange for an equivalent liability. If the transfer of assets results in private hands receiving anything less than fair-value compensation from the government, the government will have engaged (at a minimum) in unjust enrichment, if not expropriation. It is assumed that the government does not wish to enrich itself unjustly or otherwise expropriate property at the cost and loss of the former private owners, which would violate fundamental property rights and destroy investor confidence to the detriment of the public interest.

If it can be assumed that there will be no unjust enrichment or expropriation, the acquisition in its own right – as a mere transfer of assets in exchange for an equivalent liability, from an accounting standpoint – does not yield any immediate net gain on the balance sheet of either the former private owners or the government. In other words, nationalization in and of itself does not create wealth for the government, because the government must pay fair value for the assets that it has acquired. This fair value already accounts for future expected profits at the time of acquisition.

This raises the question: does the government have the money to pay fair value for the assets it acquires by nationalization? If not, it must borrow the money or sell state assets. All indications are that the government does not have the money in hand to pay. What is more, whereas the government had previously sought to sell a portion of its equity interest to raise the funds, the Ninth Amendment proposes to establish the government's retention of no less than 51% of the issued and outstanding paid-

up capital of the utilities. The government must therefore find from its own coffers (or those of the Social Security Board, as implied in the Ninth Amendment) the funds to pay fair value for at least that 51% equity capital.

In light thereof, what is the cost of borrowing this money? According to the electricity and telecommunications nationalization laws, the applicable interest rate accruing on moneys owed by the government for reasonable compensation on nationalization shall be the interest rate on fixed deposits at commercial banks in Belize at the time of acquisition. Utilizing statistics published by the Central Bank of Belize at the time of Telemedia's nationalization on August 25 2009, the average fixed deposit rate was in the vicinity of 8.5% per year. At the time of BEL's nationalization in June 2011, the average fixed deposit rate was in the vicinity of 6.5% per year.

In the case of Telemedia, using the government's rough valuation of \$5 per share as an approximate value at the time of acquisition, almost \$240 million in value was nationalized. As two years have since passed, the accrued interest alone thereon at the 8.5% rate is in excess of \$40 million, and interest continues to accrue at a little less than \$2 million per month, or \$65,000 per day.

A lot less information about the government's valuation of BEL has been forthcoming. In light thereof, having regard to BEL's book valuation of its paid-up share capital at the end of December 2010 as approximately \$285 million, and considering that the former private owners held approximately 70% of the total paid-up capital, the government acquired approximately \$200 million in value. At 6.5% per year, interest would accrue on this value at the rate of a little over \$1 million per month, or \$35,000 per day.

The nationalization of Telemedia and BEL is thus costing the government – and ultimately, the people of Belize – a minimum of approximately \$3 million per month, or \$100,000 per day, in addition to roughly \$480 million (\$440 million principal plus \$40 million interest accrued) now owed to the former private owners. In other words, nationalization of these two utilities has increased the government's national debt by almost 50%, or half of the notorious Belize Government Superbond, with interest costs equal to or more expensive than the Superbond.

Does borrowing all this money and paying all this interest constitute a more efficient allocation of scarce resources? Does nationalization bring a net benefit to the government and people of Belize? For the answer to be affirmative, the value gain of the shift in power and control from private hands to the government must be more than \$3 million per month, or more than \$35 million per year. This is not the gross dividends that the government gets from these utilities annually, but rather the increase in profits – and ultimately dividends – caused by the shift in power and control over and above the future expected profits of the former private owners at the time of acquisition.

In the case of Telemedia alone, the prospectus issued by the government is telling. It indicates that net income rose \$1 million in the year after nationalization and projects that income will increase by an additional \$17 million in the second year – largely as a result of the 5.5% reduction in the business tax rate charged on telecommunications services. Showing an increase in profit as a result of a reduction in taxes when the government is the owner of the company means little. If Telemedia were still a private company, there would be a net gain to the private shareholder at the direct cost of the government through its loss in tax revenues, but there is no net gain whatsoever under government ownership.

The expectation from the government's own financial projections as shown in the Telemedia prospectus is

that the increase in profits after nationalization of Telemedia will not surpass the running \$20 million annual cost of nationalization, even if the projections are not downwardly adjusted for the reduction in tax revenues. In simpler terms, even the government believes that nationalization is and will be a net loss. Nationalization, by the government's own projections, will not be a more efficient allocation of scarce resources. If this is the case, what is the logic in seeking to entrench nationalization when it is not in the public's economic interest?

If the underlying rationale of the Ninth Amendment does not make economic sense and is not in the public interest, then why do it? Is it more important to have power and control, even if it costs the people of Belize \$480 million plus an extra \$100,000 per day to do so? Would this scarce money not be better utilized for and invested in the people of Belize if it were applied directly to improving education and enabling job opportunities?

WRITING COMPETITION FOR BELIZE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS



ALL Belizean High School students, you are cordially invited to compete in a writing competition. The theme is :

"If I were the Prime Minister of Belize, I would..."

RULES: (ONLY THREE)

1. Essay must be limited to 350-500 words
2. Entrant must be a Belizean citizen attending a Belize High School
3. **Deadline to submit essays is: Feb 24th, 2012.**

Winners will be announced on March 2nd, 2012

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4. Media reprint and announcement.
5. And any other prizes we can muster up by the deadline

Submission:

Email: twocanview@gmail.com

Please be sure to include your name, your school's name, your contact information

CLASSIFIEDS

LIQUOR LICENCE NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that Jarreth Alfaro is applying for Malt & Cider Liquor License to be operated at "Alfaro Place", 133 Gaulin Street Mitchell Estate, under the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Ordinance Revised Edition 2000.

Notice is hereby given that Anhui Zhu is applying for Convenient Store Liquor License to be operated at "Good Friend Shop", 162 Freetown Road Belize City, under the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Ordinance Revised Edition 2000.

Notice is hereby given that Maura Mejia is applying for Publican Special Liquor License to be operated at "La Cataracha", 96 Barrack Road Belize City, under the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Ordinance Revised Edition 2000.

Notice is hereby given that Florence Tillett is applying for Shop Liquor License to be operated at "Reflections Groceries", 89 Amara Avenue Belize City, under the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Ordinance Revised Edition 2000.

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BELIZE CITRUS GROWERS ASSOCIATION

Citrus Research & Education Institute (C.R.E.I.) • Administrative, Financial, Sales Division



Release

February 8, 2012

In line with the Price Formula Agreement between the Citrus Growers Association (CGA) and the Citrus Products of Belize Ltd. (CPBL), the CGA's Committee of Management (COM) requested revised first fruit price submissions from CPBL for both orange and grapefruit. The request for orange came as a result on increasing world market price for Frozen Concentrate Orange Juice (FCOJ). The request for grapefruit was based on an agreement made with CPBL at the time of receipt of the first price submission in October that CPBL would provide a revised first fruit price submission for grapefruit in December 2011.

Citrus Growers are advised that subsequent to a request for a revised First Fruit Price Submission for both orange and grapefruit, growers will be receiving a back pay for all fruits delivered up to January 31st 2012.

The new estimated final price for orange is now \$2.3548 per pound solid or \$13.8936 per box assuming 5.9 pound solids per box as compared to \$2.2968 per pound solid or \$13.5511 per box at the beginning of the crop.

The new estimated final price for grapefruit is now \$2.0621 per pound solid or \$8.2129 per box assuming 3.9 pound solids per box as compared to \$2.0180 per pound solid or \$7.8702 per box at the beginning of the crop.

Growers will receive a back pay of \$0.0378 per pound solid or \$0.2230 per box assuming 5.9 pound solids per box for orange. For grapefruit the back pay will be \$0.0287 per pound solid or \$0.1119 per box assuming 3.9 solids per box.

The advance price for orange is now \$1.5307 per pound solid or \$9.03 per box and for grapefruit the advance price is now \$1.3404 per pound solid or \$5.2276 per box.

Growers are also notified that CPBL has indicated that it is again experiencing cash flow problems and CGA has offered its cooperation. CGA has offered for growers to accept a reduction in their first payment. CPBL is requesting a temporary reduction in the new advance payment for orange at a rate of \$0.46 per pound solid or \$2.7140 per box for deliveries for the short period from February 1st - 28th 2012. The Committee of Management has approved the request made by CPBL to ensure continued optimum processing operations and prevents any additional losses due to fruit drop or missed market opportunities that would occur if CPBL would have to reduce the volume of fruit intake in order to manage its cash flow.

Growers will therefore be getting \$1.0707 per pound solid or \$6.3171 per box for their new advance payment for orange over the next four week from February 1st – 28th 2012. CPBL will reimburse growers the withheld amounts no later than March 23rd 2012 with full and regular payments thereafter. CGA has negotiated with CPBL for growers to receive interest for the amounts withheld at a rate of 7% per annum pro-rated over the four week period. Members' deductions to the CGA for loan funds accessed from the CGA will be proportionately decreased during the three to four week period growers are receiving the reduced advance payment. CGA will collect the remaining portion of the deductions when CPBL reimburses the amounts withheld from growers' advance payment.

The COM takes this opportunity to thank growers for collaborating with their CGA to help CPBL through its cash flow problems. Growers are reminded to supervise reaping to reduce the amounts of fruit rejected and maximize income at the current attractive market prices. Growers are also reminded that they must get a licence to deliver fruits to the processor; they must bring in samples for maturity testing and must get delivery schedules before harvesting fruit.

Kindly contact the CGA at 522-3511, 522-3585, 522-3547 or 522-3535 for licence, delivery schedule or more information.