



The Independent

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Lived by the gun!

Ricky Valencia executed before historic first bench trial

Thursday, February 22, 2012

BELIZE CITY – Ricky Valencia, 28, was executed last night on Ceasar Ridge Road between 7:00 and 8:00pm by a fusillade of bullets, reports say, from a gunman who simply walked up to his vehicle leaned in and opened fire with an automatic pistol.

Police report that they found the fatally wounded Ricky Valencia seated motionless in the driver's seat of his white Toyota Corolla bearing license plate BZ-C-35436 in a pool of blood with gunshot wounds in the left and right side of his head also the left and right shoulder and his left fist. Valencia, reportedly a stevedore, was driving west in the direction of the Port of Belize when he came under fire. The vehicle simply stopped, police



Ricky Valencia

say. Valencia was taken to the KMH where he was officially pronounced dead.

Other reports suggest that Valencia had stopped in front of Little Wilt Place situated at the Wilton Cumberbatch Field and was talking to someone there when the gunman or gunmen rode up and opened fire.

Ricky Valencia's name has been in the news since his late teens as far as our records can track, however his claim to notoriety is his alleged involvement in the shooting of Prime Minister Barrow's law partner Rodwell Williams in what was the parking lot of their Albert Street Law Firm, Barrow and Williams on May 31, 2010.

The incident sparked un-
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Rhett Fuller Denied Bail



Tuesday, February 21, 2012

BELIZE CITY: Belizean businessman Rhett Fuller is in solitary confinement at the Belize Central Prison his attorney Eamon Courtenay told the media today, after Supreme Court Justice Adolph Lucas, Sr., denied an application for bail today.

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Detainee found dead in police custody!

Family does not buy police story

Thursday, February 23rd, 2012

SAN PEDRO: Miguel Martinez, 31, is not the first to have died in police custody. He is now a statistic in what many believe has become a disturbing practice by police to use excessive force when detaining persons. The deadly result has once again resurrected public outrage at the Belize Police Department.

Police issued a bland statement



Miguel Martinez

on Tuesday that around 5:00am San Pedro police were called out to nearby world-famous Phoenix Resort where they were handed Miguel Martinez of San Pedro by the resort's security guards.

Martinez was reportedly detained for disorderly on the resort's premises while armed with a machete. According to police, Martinez was taken into police custody and placed in lock-up at the San Pedro police station where he continued to make noise, police say.

Their report says that when police later checked on him when he
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SSB: Merlene Bailey resigned!

Tuesday, February 21, 2012

BELIZE CITY: This afternoon, the board of directors of the Belize Social Security Board issued a release which said in part that yesterday it had accepted CEO Merlene Bailey Martinez's resignation "due to negative public criticism and its impact to her family and her Christian community, as well as, to protect the S.S.B. from negative publicity."

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Lived by the gun!

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ease throughout the nation as local medical authorities did battle to save Williams' life before he was flown to Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami, Florida for advanced treatment. He spent six months in treatment and returned to work in December of 2010 with a bodyguard.

Valencia and Akeem Thurton, 18 years old at the time, were arrested and charged with the attempted murder. Police at the time said that the two were known affiliates of the Southside Gangsters (SSG). Investigators had also obtained a caution statement from one of the accused along with a statement from the person who loaned them the bike that they allegedly used as their transport to carry out the attempted hit. Police have not produced any evidence on who hired the men to carry out the hit and why. That was left to a lot of rumor and speculation.

Rumors and speculations are again abuzz after Valencia's execution last night. He and his alleged accomplice, Akeem Thurton appeared before Chief Justice Kenneth Benjamin on Monday, February 6th, for the commencement of what was billed as a landmark bench trial since it would have been the first in Belize since the law was passed in May of 2011.

Thurton and Valencia on the day of commencement asked the court for adjournment citing that their attorneys were unavailable, one because he did not know that the trial was to start on that day and the other because his attorney had informed that he could not represent him in the matter. The case was adjourned to Wednesday, February 9, 2012 and further adjourned to next month.

Valencia was remanded to prison in October 2011 after he was implicated in a robbery and was found carrying the SIM card of a Blackberry phone that was jacked from a young woman. Magistrate Dorothy Flowers remanded Valencia after considering his other run-ins with the law which included the attempted murder of Rodwell Williams, the robbery of Heritage Bank in Orange Walk and handling stolen goods. Unconfirmed report is that Valencia was released on bail about one month ago.

An apparent rift had developed between the SSG and GOB since the attack on Rodwell Williams and it became apparent when the Prime Minister met with Belize City gangs to broker a truce in September of last year. The SSG which Valencia and Thurton are allegedly affiliated with were reportedly boxed out of negotiations with Prime Minister Barrow when he cut short a trip to St. Kitts to attend installation ceremony for the new CCJ President, Sir Dennis Byron and instead returned home to broker a truce with the gangs.

Not to be left out or ignored the SSG sent out a release making known their discontent but Barrow did not meet with them instead Minister of Police Doug Singh and CYDP Director Edward Broaster were deployed to meet with the SSG.

In their release the SSG accused the Prime Minister and representatives of the Government of "making their own truce with the George Street Gang. GOB is using the SSG as their scapegoat to mend their relationship with the George Street Gang," the SSG charged in their release. George Street's main base is in the heart of Barrow's constituency the Queen's Square Division.

Ricky Valencia's violent end was for many a foregone conclusion. Our reports are that he had just been released after being detained for several hours by police for questioning in the broad daylight downtown

armed holdup of a messenger which netted the robbers \$70,000. Valencia has become a near legend for his reputed daring.

Valencia had also been charged in the April 2011 armed holdup of the Heritage Bank Orange Walk Branch and his alleged accomplice and neighbor, Noel "Biggs" Usher had been gunned down just down the street and around the corner from where Ricky met his end in similar fashion.

Usher was slain in a barrage of shots by two men on bicycles who caught up with him a block from his home in October of last year. Three months before he had barely escaped being killed when he was shot in the neck by two assassins who apparently bided their time only to return and complete the job.

Both Usher and Valencia had beat armed robbery and murder raps,

as well as assassination attempts before. Valencia had escaped unscathed in April 2010 when two men in a vehicle opened up on him. His girlfriend at the time was shot in the abdomen and legs.

The street talk was that Usher was killed because he had turned state evidence in the bank robbery case but few think it was as simple as that. The past few years has seen three of the SSG "baddest" gunned down. Reputed SSG boss Andre "Dre" Trapp was executed on the very doorstep of the nation's courthouse in June 2010, and since 2008 several young men have been shot dead in the area of Kraal Road, Fabers Road and Yaborough/Cesar Ridge Road.

There have also been two grenade detonations and one live grenade turned over to the police. What is believed to have been a deadly rivalry between several gangs had appeared to have been calmed the past few months and now there are some who believe that Ricky Valencia's death is part of a "mopping up" operation that have more to do with other things than a "mere gang rivalry".

We may never know.

Detainee found dead in police custody!



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quieted they discovered him motionless in the cell. Although Martinez was found apparently dead early that morning, Dr. Javier Zuniga wasn't called in until approximately 8:00am. Martinez was pronounced dead shortly after.

Other reports give a different version of what transpired in police lock-up. Martinez was reportedly locked up with handcuffs on and one report alleges that he was beaten while cuffed.

Another source told the Independent that witnesses saw police beating an intoxicated Martinez in front of the police station before he was taken inside. Martinez's father, Emmanuel Diego, said that his son's pants was found in front of the police station which suggests that something other than what police are claiming happened to his son.

Unconfirmed report to us also says that the cell where Martinez was placed was emptied prior to him being placed in it and allegedly further beaten. As police always say – they are investigating.

SSB: Merlene Bailey resigned!

Continued from page 1

The board and the Barrow administration is hoping that with Bailey-Martinez' departure the spotlight of scrutiny will shine elsewhere after several weeks of speculation, scandal and an investigation.

Almost two months ago the Government had announced that it was writing off housing loans owing to the retirement scheme that had principal loan balances of less than \$50,000, and almost immediately it was revealed that the CEO and several of the top level management staffers had borrowed from commercial banks and paid down in order to qualify.

Mrs. Bailey-Martinez and the Internal Auditor, Denise Mahler, were placed on "administrative leave" and an investigation commenced.

Last week it was announced that

the Board had terminated Bailey-Martinez over the objections of its Chair Lois Young-Barrow but she showed up to work yesterday.

Following a board meeting last night the deputy chairman, Dennis Jones, who acted as chairman in Young-Barrow's absence told Channel 5 News: "We had a process which began with the placement of Mrs. Martinez, the C.E.O. and the internal auditor on administrative leave. When the accusations were being made, we felt that was the best thing to do to allow them space where an investigation could be done. The investigation was initiated; we got a draft report which we then sent to the two individuals or them to review. They reviewed this report and had comments which we then took back to the investigators, PKF. And they made some comments to us in a discussion last Thursday. We have since received the resignation of Mrs. Martinez which we accepted and we will ask the acting C.E.O., Mrs. Vega, to hold over for the duration of the period coming up until we can work out transitional arrangements with Misses Martinez and Mrs. Vega."

Jones reportedly told Channel 5 News that no other staffers will be subject to any discipline. Mrs. Bailey-Martinez thus leaves with her write off and severance package.

Our reports are that Ms. Lois Young-Barrow had left the country to seek specialist medical attention in the United States.

Rhett Fuller Denied Bail

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Lucas ruled that Fuller was a flight risk because "circumstances have changed".

Fuller, 40, has been fighting deportation to the United States for nearly 12 years and is awaiting a decision as to whether or not the Belize Court of Appeal will entertain a judicial review of the Minister of Foreign Affairs decision to extradite him.

US justice officials have been trying to extradite Fuller since 1998. (See Just Sayin column on Page 5).



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EDITORIAL

Sycophants and criminals

If the Barrow administration is to be believed, Belize's macro-economic picture is a very good one, and the only dark cloud on its horizon is the increase in interest payments for the so-called Superbond.

In a presentation before the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry this week, UDP Leader Dean Barrow seemed upbeat about Belize's economic prospects, and was insistent that it was his stewardship that had shepherd Belize safely through the world economic recession and had placed it on the path to prosperity.

The big numbers are good he claims. There is consistent GDP growth, measurable increases in revenues and reserves, a narrowing of the trade deficit and some \$350,000,000 was invested in the tourism sector last year.

Yes, he says in a by the way fashion, government revenues were primarily bolstered as a result of higher prices for oil exports but that is a good thing.

In Mr. Barrow's view Belize is more helped than hurt by high oil prices. Government revenues are increased by the higher prices for our oil exports even if ordinary Belizeans are hard hit by higher pump prices.

Right now we have higher reserves and a narrowing trade deficit because we import less and on the international balance sheet this looks good. The ruling politicians would rather not have us view this as the result of a perceptible lessening of local economic activity because there are less people employed and less money being spent.

The Barrow administration claims that there is much by way of new investments, both by local and foreign businessmen, and have produced statistics to buttress their claim. It is not being seen or felt on the micro level, however, and the scepticism among those attending the presentation who were not partisan was apparent.

We can understand why these may seem to be the best of times for some Belizeans. If you are politically connected to the UDP your economic picture the past four years has been a good one. If you are not then it either hasn't improved or it has worsened.

This is the "cognitive dissonance" in our socio-economic picture – we are a nation divided between the UDP and the rest. We would like to think that 6-7 years ago when the UDP were levelling the same charge at the then ruling PUP they were right. Ours is a system of patronage and victimization.

The "smart" people know when to jump ship, or when to "copper their bets". They know how to keep their options with each party open. At this point in time we cannot berate them for their expediency – life ha'ad out ya.

But there is a large middle class, that is persons living on fixed wages who, despite being employed and earning a pay check, are trapped between the rising cost of living and stagnant wages, and who's only hope of a better life is hitting some elusive jackpot. For them the macro-economic picture means little – what is negatively impacting is how much less their wages buy with each passing year, or so it seems.

Many of them are the folks who when polled tell you they don't know who they are going to vote for, or that they have not even decided to vote. They are frustrated and unhappy with a political system that does not offer them the hope of a better life short of being sycophantic or criminal.

It should not be that way.

The most common and perhaps greatest indictment of the now ended Barrow administration is that they promised to change all that. These have been the best of times for a few, and the worst of times for many. Their argument that the previous administration was bad is acceptable, but things weren't bad for so many under the previous administration either.

Sure the Barrow administration have begun implementing some measures that offer some relief assistance to some Belizeans, but if we are to make more than a dent in the now endemic poverty ravaging Belize we need poverty alleviation, reduction and eradication programs. And this best one we know, the tried and true one is to simply grow the economy. Economic growth is the rising tide that lifts all boats.

Not fancy speeches or ringing denunciations, and no amount of excuses, no manner of eliding can change that.

TOLEDO IS STILL THE FORGOTTEN DISTRICT

By Valentino Shal

Toledo is still an afterthought in national politics. If someone tells you otherwise, that person is trying to deceive you. With a population of about 30,000 people Toledo is most economically depressed region of Belize. It is used mainly to provide resources for the rest of the national economy when needed. It is like an internal colony for the rest of the country. Its people and natural resources are exploited for the benefit of others and what ends up here is barely a trickle; insufficient to create a strong economy and improve the standard of living for the people.

Toledo is the poorest district in Belize. With such a high level of poverty, it was given special attention in the National Poverty Elimination Strategy and Action Plan (NPESAP) which incidentally terminated in 2011. At one point there was even a Toledo Poverty Reduction Action Plan written specifically for the South. Like so much that goes on in government, no one will be held to account for the failure to implement these plans. Who will evaluate whether anything was achieved by the NPESAP or the Toledo Action Plan? It seems that once those plans were written no one bothered to look at them again much less actually tried to implement the strategies outlined in them. Toledo along with Southside Belize City were designated Special Development Areas. Southside got RESTORE Belize; Toledo, the usual. Nothing. It was special only on paper. To be fair, RESTORE Belize came about mostly because the city residents have become sick and tired of the crime and violence and not because someone was actually using the poverty elimination plan.

Today much of the attention on Toledo is focused on the wholesale extraction of rosewood by highly politically connected "businessmen" and the oil exploration activities in the Sarstoon-Temash National Park. Were it not for these exploitative activities no one would be really talking about Toledo. Why anyone who bears some degree of responsibility doesn't even bother to talk about the need for employment or the need to foster business and investment is mindboggling. There is the highway to connect to Guatemala through Jalacte that is being built but no one has really explained how it is going to work in the best interest of the people here. There has not even been talk of whether proper customs and immigration posts will be built to facilitate the movement of people and trade. While this modern highway is being built, streets, village feeder roads and farm roads are totally neglected and are in a state of total disrepair. Farmers can't get to their farms. Villagers can't get to their village. One school was inaccessible to the teachers because of the bad road conditions.

Many of Toledo's youth still do their homework by the light of home-made lamps and travel very long distances early in the morning in pursuit of a secondary education.

Children here are still afflicted by basic illnesses such as respiratory infections and diarrhoea. Getting to see a doctor or a nurse takes hours, if not days. Common medicines such as pain killers and antibiotics are hard to come by. Two tiny pharmacies serve a population almost half of that of Belize City. Most children after completing primary education will never see the doors to a high school while their parents eke out a living by subsistence farming and have never had a bank account in this modern age of mobile phone banking.

Toledo's political leaders today are silent, as their predecessors have been. They cower in the face of Belize City politicians and fear that the little they have will be taken away or they keep quiet in order to help only themselves and few close friends with the crumbs they are given. To add to the humiliation, this entire district of about 30,000 people has only two Area Representatives in parliament. Politics in this district is petty, governance crude and leadership mediocre. Public service is a dilapidated version of excellence. Local organizations, as many as there are, lack the organizational quality to meaningfully affect the standard of living in this district. The humility of the people perhaps gets in the way of making more serious demands as these challenges seem insurmountable. The remainder of BNTF 5, a grant program by the Caribbean Development Bank and the remainder of the Banana Support Programme that completed some health centers, water systems and electrified a couple villages in 2007 are the most recent activities that can be considered development investments for Toledo. This is absolutely insufficient and deplorable.

Toledo's biggest export is people, as those who can, leave this district. This people-drain leave vast agricultural lands undeveloped and dreams of a vibrant society with a growing economy are deferred to an unknown and uncertain future. This stagnant environment aborts ambitions and life continues to be a painful struggle. It is under these circumstances that the plunder of the forests by locals to earn a few dollars, and gains some sympathies. Sympathies however, will not develop Toledo or Belize. Something needs to be done and be done urgently. Surely another poverty reduction action plan is not what we should have in mind. We have had too many of those. One thing is for certain, the lives and future of 10% of the population of this country must cease to be an afterthought. It is probably time they took matters into their own hands because Toledo is still the forgotten district.

 **The Independent**

Newspaper
is published by
Adsports

@1442 Scallop Avenue, Belize City

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Admin. Asst: Katyce Flowers

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Logistics: Gerald Garbutt

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Opinions

By Rhenae Nunez



JUST SAYIN'

Rhett Fuller - is this really his swan song? And is he Belize's quid pro quo?

In October of last year while Rhett Fuller awaited the decision of the Minister of Foreign Affairs on his fate, whether he will be extradited to Miami, Florida in the United States to face first degree murder charge, he attorney Eamon Courtney said that their position then was a case of "do or die". But Fuller hung around to sing another day.

But life for him since August of last year when he turned himself in, has not been a bed of roses having been incarcerated at the Hattieville Central Prison in solitary confinement and only being allowed only four hours of sunlight per week.

It makes no sense to me why Mr. Fuller would be treated so inhumanely in a Belize prison when he has not committed any crime against the state of Belize. It makes no sense that anyone would be subjected to such treatment anywhere.

It begs the question: why Fuller is being dragged over the coals all this time? Why all of a sudden are we so considerate of treaty obligations in Fuller's case when there are records of cases where Belizeans have been successfully defended against extradition?

This is not to diminish what Fuller is wanted for or the fact that someone died but from my research the United States got their man. He has served time and has moved on with his life. I am not clear on what is considered in an extradition matter but given certain things that have come to light regarding this case, it begs the question: why is Rhett Fuller is being made to walk the plank?

According to a story in a Miami publication called Miami News Times, North Miami Beach police Ed Hill who spent decades tracking Fuller said that "He (Fuller) fell in with a bad crowd, especially Carlos Cuello."

He (Fuller) even regularly phoned Ed Hill, the North Miami Beach police detective in charge of Miller's murder, to check in. Whenever they caught Cuello, Fuller said he told Hill, he would return to Miami to testify against him.

"Fuller's story took the first of several bizarre turns in 1997. That October, a local police officer showed up at his home and carted him off. When he walked into a humid interrogation room, Fuller found Hill with two other Dade cops. The detectives had finally caught a break in Miller's murder case two years earlier, when the New York Police Department had responded to a domestic disturbance and found Carlos Cuello's girlfriend so angry that she flat-

out said, "This guy's wanted for murder in Florida," the Miami News Times Reported.

According to the report, Fuller offered to testify if he "would not get slapped with first degree murder charge." The story went on to say that the detectives were hoping to get Fuller to testify against his alleged partner in crime, Carlos Cuello, in another case. Cuello, the detectives claimed had murdered a woman, Marisa Maugeri. "They (Miami detectives) knew that Carlos had killed her too, and they needed me (Fuller) to testify against him."

"I thought, *Holy shit, I'm in trouble now*," he says. "I was scared as shit. But right there, I told Ed Hill no. I knew it was wrong. I wasn't going to pin that on Carlos," Fuller said according to the Miami News Time report.

"Fuller's attorney, [Eamon Courtney](#), filed numerous appeals," the News Times reported. "The heart of his argument was that Hill had coerced damaging information out of Fuller by promising a deal. Hill says that allegation is ridiculous: "I'm in no position to offer anyone deals in the first place. I'm a detective, not a prosecutor."

Miami cop Ed Hill would face his own problems with his department for which he was disciplined. "Fuller's claim that Hill was duplicitous, meanwhile, gained some legitimacy in 2007 when the detective had his own bizarre run-in with the law. In May of that year, Hill arrested a 44-year-old house painter and driveway paver named [David Superville](#) on second-degree murder charges. Superville had a much younger wife, a gorgeous, 30-year-old Russian named [Anna Gulevitskaya](#) whom he'd met online and called a "mail-order bride." With her husband in jail, Hill bought her hotel rooms, tickets to Russia, and dinners, and the relationship turned sexual," the News Times reported.

"When Superville got out on bail six months later, he learned from former customers that his wife was shagging the cop who had booked him: Ed Hill. Internal affairs investigators soon found Hill guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer and civil service violations, and suspended him for three weeks. He was suspended again in July 2009, after a friend of Gulevitskaya's was murdered in West Little River. Hill showed up at the crime scene and pretended to be part of a "Russian task force" to draw information out of Miami-Dade police investigators. Again, he was found guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer and

Impartial View: Internationally instantaneously impactful

By Marshall Nunez, Sr.

With the elections less than 2 weeks away the political conversation is tipping the Fahrenheit scale. Over the past few weeks I've been listening to people from all different sectors of the community and I've been engaged in some conversations and I have even been in some debates and argument. When you take out the emotions and you deal with the substance in those discussions there are some very important information and I wish to share some of them with you all.

I've listened to directors of companies, senior managers, and other members of the private sector. I've listened to ordinary Belizeans on the street corners, to students, to taxi operator and I've listened to supporters of the major political parties as well as those who favor independent candidates and have a more independent view. The single common denominator among all is that they believe that their quality of life is worse now than it was 4 years ago. Most of them agree that as a nation we are less safe now than we were 4 years ago. Similar to results of previous polls there are some who believe that the UDP will win, there are some who believe the PUP will win and there are those who are waiting to make up their minds.

Another stat that I pick up from these discussions is that many people are disappointed with the performance of the Barrow administration. Others while not totally committed to going PUP believe that the PUP does a better job of managing the economy. My contribution to the debates, conversations or arguments have had to do with my provoking question of whether they think that there is a state of passive resistance by the voters against the Barrow administration. My question usually follows that compares now to the period of 2005-2007 when the then Leader of the Opposition Dean Barrow declared that his party was embarking on a sustained campaign of civil disobedience. That civil disobedience campaign sparked demonstrations by public officers, teachers, students and ngo's. The follow up is do you believe all those organizations, the ngo's, the public officers, the teachers and the students are all satisfied with the performance of the Barrow administration? I will leave

these same thought provoking questions with you all as we prepare to go and cast our votes on March 7th.

Last week Impartial View commented on the squandering of cash on the nominations. Wednesday night the UDP bussed in thousands of supporters from across the country to create the perception that they are so popular in Belize City. They had a massive crowd at the rally after the launch of their manifesto, but it is estimated that the rally cost nearly a hundred thousand dollars. And the reality is only about 25% of the people that were there are from Belize City. Then of course politics is about perception and they are trying to create the perception.

What are facts is that the PUP and UDP launched there manifestos this week and the UDP television, station Channel 7 had to agree that the PUP manifesto entitled "Deliverance for Belize" has a far better economic plan for the country than the UDP's "Always for The People". Earlier this week Channel 7 aired an excerpt from a UDP rally in Orange Walk where prime minister Barrow was pondering to his UDP supporters and he was captured saying "I don't give a damn about the rating agencies."

Later in the same excerpt he said "There cannot be a bad barrower without a bad lender."

I don't think Mr. Barrow realizes that although he was only pondering aloud to his supporter, in this technological era that we live as you say something it is plastered all over the world. So when he was trying to play "hero" for his ordinary UDP supporters he ended up creating major offence for the international funding agencies and the rating agencies. When S&P downgraded Belize ratings recently they stated that it was based on the attitude of the government. Mr. Barrow may have committed one of the greatest travesties of his political life.

Remember that prime minister Barrow wanted to give the World Bank a piece of his mind for a loan that was approved for the country. Belize still hasn't gotten the money from the World Bank.

Remember when Mr. Barrow told us that he chastised the British Prime Minister, Camaron, and since then BATSUB has pulled out of Belize resulting in the loss of 30 million dollars from our local economy.

Now Barrow is going out of his way to pretend that he is always for the people? Given the situation above I ask all the voters of Belize to imagine the possibilities if the Barrow administration is reelected.

Just my Impartial View.

neglect of duty," the report went on.

According to the News Times, officer Ed Hill was not done there. "A handwriting expert testified that Hill had forged Superville's signature on a form waiving his [Miranda rights](#).

"What I've read here is appalling," [Miami-Dade Circuit Judge Jorge Cueto](#) said. The murder case against Superville might be dropped altogether because of Hill's ethical lapses.

Rhett Fuller believes this behavior shows Hill would have been willing to illegally strong-arm him into pinning Maugeri's murder on Carlos Cuello in exchange for a deal.

"I blame this whole situation today on Ed Hill," he says. "Obviously, the mistake to run in the first place is on my shoulders. But I trusted him, and I think this whole case today and the drive to bring me back to Miami comes from his being angry that I wouldn't help them with Maugeri's case."

The series of events in this saga has me questioning the veracity of the case against Fuller and why it seems that the Government of Belize is hell bent on extraditing him when the person who heads the investigation character has left much to be questioned....just say-in....

BLUE NOTES:

Leadership vs Leadership

There is overwhelming anecdotal evidence and statistical data to support the assertion that the character of the leader is what defines the movement led. A recent pollster puts it quite succinctly: the political leader is interchangeable with the political party it leads. Let us reflect on the leadership of George Price, Philip Goldson, Manuel Esquivel, Said Musa and the parties they led. Were not the parties they led somewhat characteristic of their political souls? – at least this is the way it seems the voters generally perceived them - Belizean identity and Independence, Pro-British and Passionately Anti-Guatemala, Frugal to the point of being Parsimonious, Economic Growth bordering on Extravagance.

On March 7th, 2012 we will be faced with the choice of not two but three leaders for those who vote on the basis of the leadership principle. We will have the incumbent the PM Dean Barrow of the UDP, Hon. Francis Fonseca, undisputed leader of the PUP, and Bobby Lopez, leader of the BUA. I firmly believe that in making that choice we need to fathom deeply the cellar of their souls. We need to walk cautiously down the corridors to their cellars and quickly switch their lights on. Only so we will really know if there are rats in the cellar of their souls.

PM Dean Barrow the then young upstart and promising lawyer was a rising star in the UDP when he overwhelmingly won his first electoral contest in the Queen Square constituency

in 1984. That year the UDP, a mutant of various opposition parties, finally broke the lock-out from control of public policy and defeated the monolithic PUP for the first time in a very convincing fashion. For many who lost, Dean Barrow's victory offered some consolation. He clearly expressed his desire to purge his party of its colonial mentality and root out the politics of hate generally. He was to be the master of triangulating. He would elevate party politics to a higher level- the end of what many perceived as emerging pork barrel politics and political tribalism. The Hon. Dean Barrow was reelected in 1989 but his party lost. Dean was apparently ahead of his party. His party's mind-set was not ready for change and the people changed them. The UDP was reelected in 1993 but then lost again this time devastatingly in 1998. This was to be the third degree frustration for Dean Oliver Barrow- the end of his political career. But then along came his benefactor, financial not spiritual, who nurtured him and boosted his morale while in the political wilderness. The man and his time had converged. He will finally be king and could translate his noble ideas into their physical equivalent. He led his party to a massive victory in 2008 on a strong platform of zero tolerance for corruption.

But that was to be his elusive dream. Was it the Lord Acton's absolute power that betrayed him? Did the obsession with wanting to be King wear down his soul? No. It was the rat that was in the cellar of his soul nourished by the harshness of the wilderness. He went

against all the good governance principles that he vowed to uphold. His family and friends benefited unduly. He downplayed the Public Accounts Committee. He trivialized the Auditor General's Reports. He emasculated the Integrity Commission. He disrespected the Chief Justice and effectively nullified the Appellate Court's decision by using the disproportionate power of the state. He derides those who differ with him and treat them with contempt. He betrayed his friends with no remorse; even the Lord who nurtured him while in the wilderness. He abuses the Immigration and Election laws for his electoral benefit. He commandeers public money for his campaign with effrontery. Rather than punish he rewards known rogue ministers once they tow the line. Is this a life of enigma? Or is it the rat in the cellar of the soul.

Bobby Lopez, leader of the BUA, appears to be a fairly decent young man with good intentions for his constituents and those beyond. But the reality of our electoral politics is to get control of public policy through the legislatures. At best they are hoping to be able to force a coalition, but with whom? Should the voters take a chance or calculate at a risk?

Hon. Francis Fonseca, the man who had the courage to pick up the mantle of leadership, unified his party, and in a short time put it in a state of readiness that all the polls are showing the party neck and neck with the UDP or in some cases inching away. Fonseca has had two electoral victories in the Freetown

constituency, has served as Attorney General and distinguished himself as Minister of Education in the previous administration, and has served for a short time as Leader of the Opposition in the House. He is a very unassuming person. A man no doubt of rare humility, friendly but firm. He is immensely tolerant but certainly not weak. He has the qualities of competence, courage and integrity for leadership. Those who did not follow him over the years could have seen much of him in these last months. Francis is simply natural.

Those who went to the Chamber of Commerce hosting of the two leaders had a wonderful opportunity to compare. Barrow not displaying his usual arrogance, perhaps humbled by the Iron Lady he derided from a distance, spoke of all he will be doing if elected. But much of what he said he will be doing was what he said four years ago and was very much elusive of why he called the elections one whole year before. The healthy overview of the economy narrated by him was clearly contradicted by the economic figures he circulated.

Fonseca gave a very lucid picture of where he wants to go. No grandiose projects and pie in the sky promises, just getting the basics done that have been somewhat eluding previous administrations. He presented a very common sense road map as to how he intends to get us there.

This is it. Don't continue down the road to perdition. Look seriously at the new destination and how we can get there.

Alberto Vellos Dorla Vaughan Gary Ayuso Patrick Thompson Swamy Babani

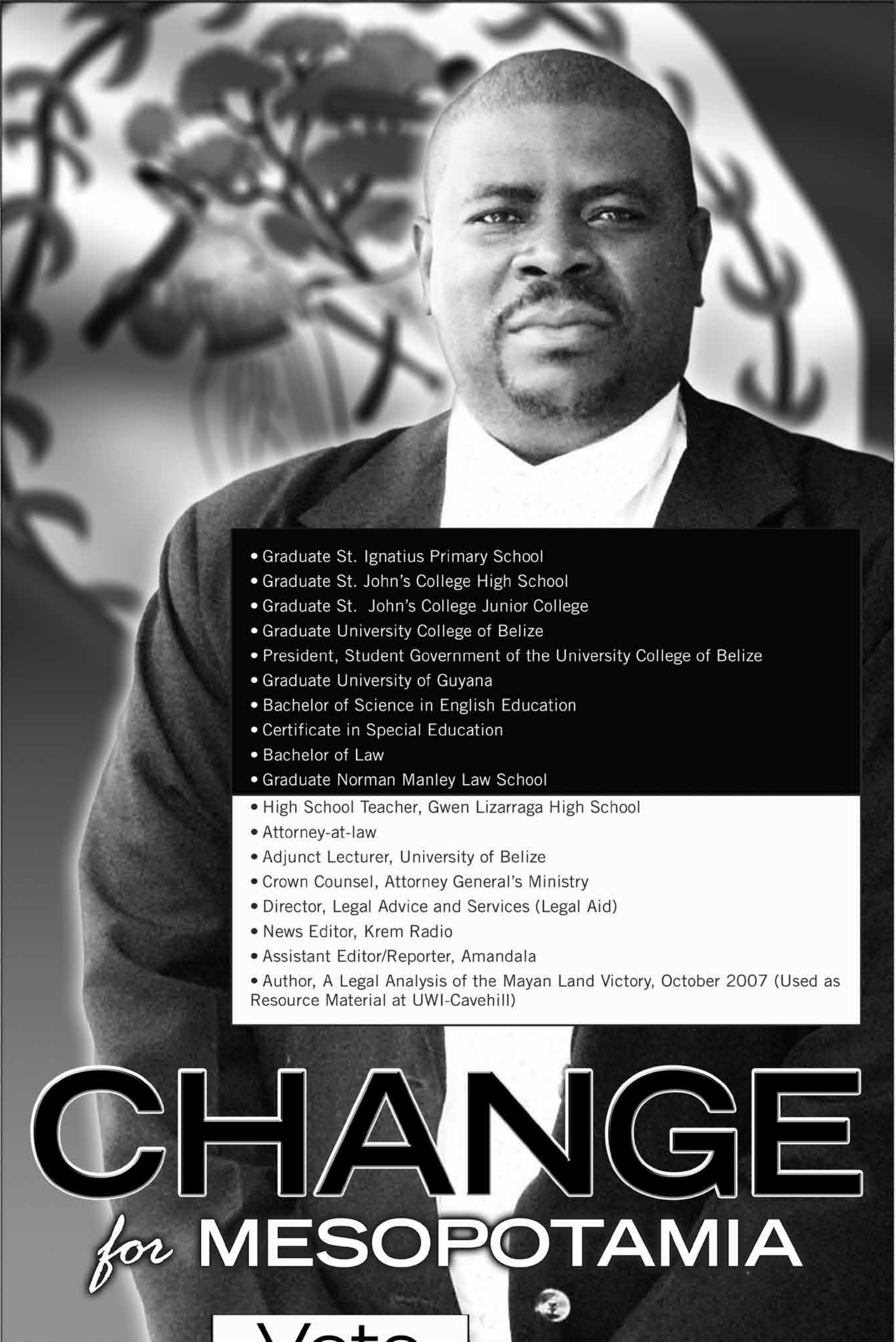
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Karen Bodden
for Mayor

VOTE PUP



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- Graduate St. John's College Junior College
- Graduate University College of Belize
- President, Student Government of the University College of Belize
- Graduate University of Guyana
- Bachelor of Science in English Education
- Certificate in Special Education
- Bachelor of Law
- Graduate Norman Manley Law School
- High School Teacher, Gwen Lizarraga High School
- Attorney-at-law
- Adjunct Lecturer, University of Belize
- Crown Counsel, Attorney General's Ministry
- Director, Legal Advice and Services (Legal Aid)
- News Editor, Krem Radio
- Assistant Editor/Reporter, Amandala
- Author, A Legal Analysis of the Mayan Land Victory, October 2007 (Used as Resource Material at UWI-Cavehill)

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FINANCIAL SENSE

Coping with Job Loss



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.

career?

3. Check your education and skills – are they up to date?

4. Do you have the time and money to invest at this time to update your skills set?

5. Is there enough money in the till to sustain you while you make the career change?

- Job references - Don't be embarrassed about losing your job. Shout it from the mountain top, let all your friends, family, and acquaintances know, since they might prove to be a good source of reference for you. Use networking to your advantage, join associations, and link up with others in your field. Another idea is to volunteer your time to helping others; my personal preference is the Belize Red Cross Society.

- Handle your separation package with the utmost care – remember you

are out of work and still have your family to take care of, now is definitely not the time to be a big spender

- If you have health insurance keep it – if a medical catastrophe hits while you are unemployed it will be financially crippling. I know that health insurance providers allow you to convert your health insurance plan from your employer. Alternatively, if your spouse is working and have a medical plan, ensure that you get onto their plan.

- Keep your life insurance – for goodness sake's if you have a life insurance plan please maintain it. When we are in a financial bind the first thing we get rid of is our life insurance. If you are the sole breadwinner in your family and times are tough, think about the reality if you are no longer around to provide for them. It may not seem tangible right now but ask a widow about the value of life insurance.

- Have an emergency spending plan – revise your spending habits. STOP using your credit card. As a matter of fact, seek to pay it off in full.

In the event of a job loss don't panic. Don't make hasty financial decisions that could have adverse effects on your finances well into the future. While all the reports seem to represent doom and gloom – this too shall pass and things will get better. Whatever happens, don't put your financial future in jeopardy.

By Judy M. McCutcheon

Re-engineering, restructuring, downsizing, rightsizing, mergers, and layoffs have been very prevalent since the global economic downturn started in 2008, and by the look of things we may not see any reprieve until 2015 or thereabouts. Situations like these have become a daily staple for many households across the globe and Belize, unfortunately, has not been spared from this economic disaster. People are losing their jobs as businesses fight to keep their doors open and no matter what happens breadwinners need to ensure that their families are provided for, so there is a great deal of stress in an economy such as this. Losing a job is traumatic, but it really does not have to be financially disastrous. We live in a global village in which change is but the only constant, what we must realize is that change is happening rapidly and it's happening at a company near you. Whilst being laid off or getting downsized may be beyond our control, there are some things we can do financially to ensure that we stay afloat even when we feel that our ship might be sinking.

It can be very stressful dealing with the loss of income and other benefits, but you can take some action to make your transition more manageable and less stressful for all concerned. Some important moves in the early stages can put you on the right track until you become employed again; making any financial mistake at this time can prove to be disastrous well into the future. Here are some things you can do to keep you buoyant until your ship comes in:

- Look for work immediately – do not misjudge the market. Sometimes it might be tempting to take a little holiday before you start looking for work – don't. In the present economic state, it's best to start looking for work right away, you don't want to be using up all your financial resources at this time

- Career re-assessment – now might be good time to look at a change in careers, but before you make such a drastic move ponder on the following considerations:

1. Realistically, is it the time to make a change?
2. Are you qualified for this new

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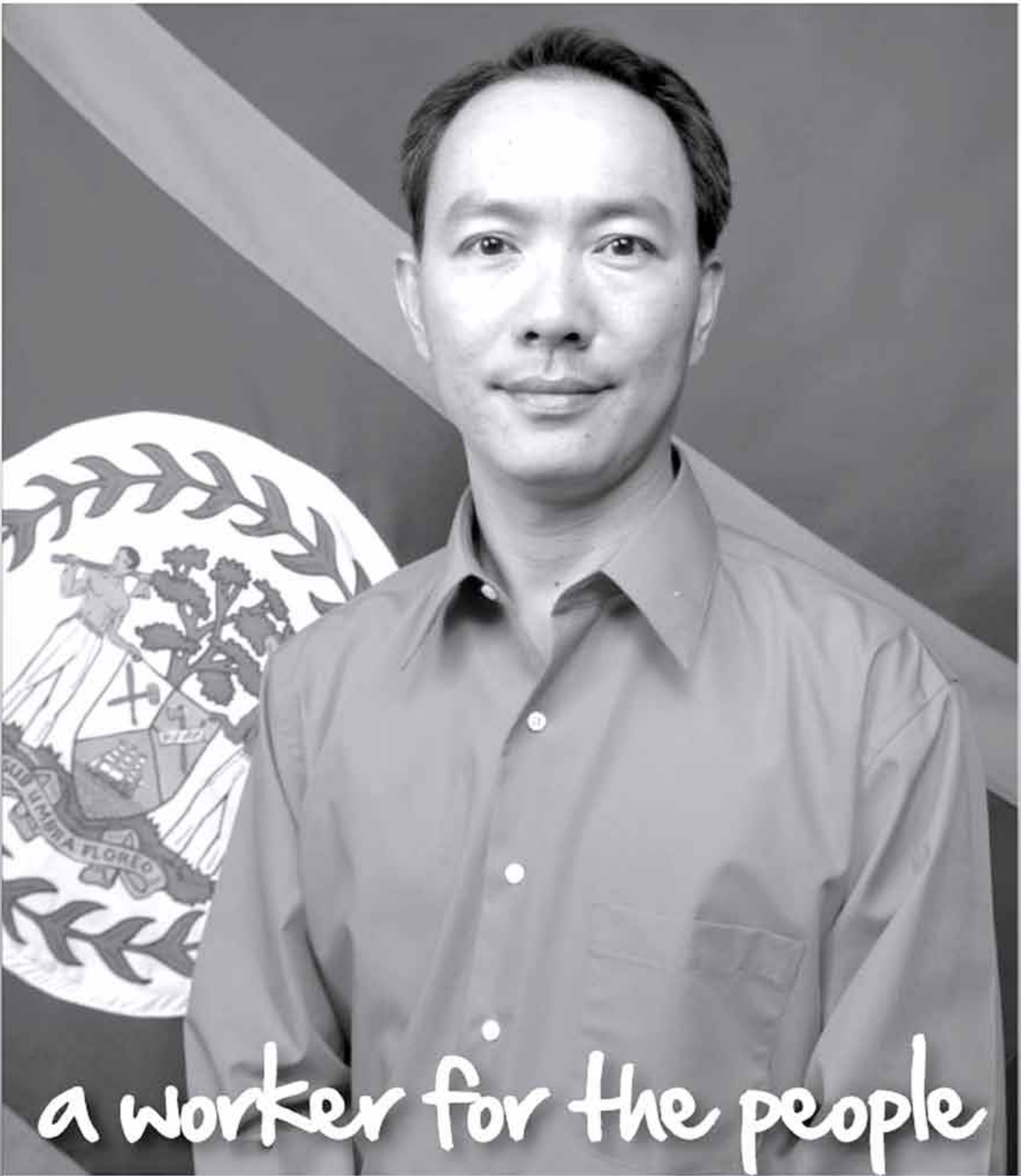
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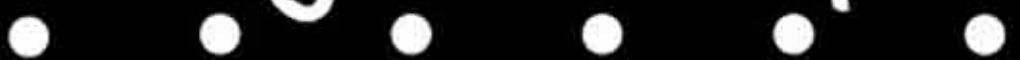
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ADDRESS TO BELIZE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

PUP LEADER FRANCIS FONSECA

FEBRUARY 20TH, 2012

Back to Basics: Thinking Differently About Governance

Ladies and Gentlemen, what I want to do today is share with you my vision for how I think Belize should be governed and how I would like to lead Belize if given the opportunity.

While I will share with you specific initiatives and ideas on key sectors of the economy, this should not be taken as any kind of detailed policy statement. Consider it more as a statement of what my philosophical moorings are; the beliefs I hold that would inform my approach to policy-making for Belize.

Where Belize is

I start by making three observations which I'm sure are shared by many Belizeans:

Firstly, generation after generation of Belizeans has been told that Belize has great potential, but we seem unable to unlock that potential.

Secondly, election after election, governments have frustrated our hopes and disappointed our expectations. Political interests consistently trump the national interest.

Thirdly, Belize simply cannot afford to lose another decade; if we do not place our country firmly on the path to economic development and progress now, our legacy to future generations of Belizeans may be a Belize that is a failed state.

Problem-Solving, not Personality Politics

I don't believe that we are consigned to that fate. I would like to lead a movement for change that puts Belize squarely on the path to progressive growth and development by finally casting aside personality politics and adopting a problem-solving, solutions approach to governing.

So where do we begin?

The next government we elect must have demonstrated that it has a credible plan to find solutions to our social and economic problems. This means setting aside grandiose plans and unrealistic goals and settling down to the basics of governing.

It also means that leaders must suppress egos and the urge to settle scores against the opposing political party and focus on the task of building Belize.

I have enough experience in government – as well as in Opposition – to know that what we have to do is get the basics right. If we can accomplish that we would have laid the proper foundation to

move Belize forward.

Getting back to the basics

What do I mean by getting back to the basics? When I use that phrase, I'm thinking, for example, about:

Ensuring that our hospitals have essential medicines and good administration;

Providing accessible educational facilities to all Belizeans through the tertiary level;

Coming to a sober, realistic assessment of our capability to effectively combat crime and secure our borders from incursion then enlisting help from countries that are able to assist us.

Ensuring that we have good basic roads and clean reliable public ground transport systems before aspiring to 4-lane highways;

Creating an enabling environment for sustainable economic development.

Keeping the existing cities and towns we have clean and organized before aspiring to build new cities like Mahogany Heights.

Relationship with Private Sector

As I see it, if governments of Belize are overwhelmed just dealing with providing the most essential services to its people, then government needs to:

1. Focus on its core functions: delivery of reliable, quality, affordable public services;

2. View the private sector not as a source of ever-increasing taxes to fund sprawling government projects and ambitions, but as the sector that holds the key to economic development by creating the enabling environment for the private sector to attract and undertake investment, grow businesses and create employment;

3. Reduce its bureaucracy and bureaucratic spending and enhance its regulatory and enforcement capacity.

To put it concisely: I believe that the private sector must be facilitated by government to generate wealth and profits, while government must use its fair share of taxes to provide the essential public services in health, education, personal security, infrastructure and to exponentially expand its capacity to impact the social ills of the country.

Restoring confidence in the economy of Belize

How do we restore confidence in the Belizean economy? It starts with a Smart Na-

tional Economic Policy.

Belize has 8,867 square miles or 5,674,880 acres of land, 12 miles of territorial sea, 200 miles of exclusive economic zone, untold millions of barrels of petroleum and other valuable minerals and the skill and ingenuity of an over 130,000 strong labor force. It has geographic proximity to and shares the English language with the wealthiest country on earth. It has other large markets in its immediate vicinity and it has inherited the preferred and familiar English common law legal system. To maximize economic growth, we need to competently and efficiently maximize the use of all these resources and comparative advantages.

Creating the enabling environment for private sector led economic growth means not only pursuing tax policies which encourage instead of discourage investment in Belize but also restoring confidence in the economy of Belize. The private sector must be confident that the Government will always act to secure and not undermine the private ownership of property in Belize. The Government must immediately act to circumscribe the circumstances in which private property can compulsorily be taken in the public interest in Belize in order to forever prevent the taking of private property in this country at the expense of national economic interests in the pursuit of personality politics or to promote political interests.

We must also act to ensure that in those instances where nationalizations are justifiably undertaken that persons deprived of property are promptly compensated. To that end there should be no compulsory acquisition of property in this country from any person regardless of political or other persuasion without there having been first voted and allocated sufficient funds to cover the costs of the acquisition.

Apart from compulsory acquisitions, the government must lead by example and begin to take full responsibility for its own commercial transactions. It must be that when the Government signs a commercial contract that it is beyond question that the Government will honor its commercial obligations. In business government must be true to its own words and not seek to utilize powers of state to

escape its obligations or to oppress competing private enterprise. To that end the appointment of all judicial and public officers who exercise authority over business enterprises must truly be independent.

Investment requires certainty. The next PUP Government will enact a FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND PROMOTION ACT which will provide clarity and survive successive regimes. Under this Act a net benefit "test" will be applied to determine:

the effect of the investment on economic activity in Belize;

the degree of participation by Belizeans in the business in question;

the effect of the investment on productivity, efficiency, technological development, product innovation and product variety in Belize;

the effect of the investment on competition;

the compatibility of the investment with national, industrial, economic and cultural policies; and

the contribution to Belize's ability to compete globally.

Let us look at a few specific sectors:

The Tourism Sector- A special customized tourism investment incentives law will be established to reduce the cost of investing in tourism in Belize. Particular focus will be given to facilitate growth in target areas identified in a national tourism strategy plan. This of course will include Ambergris Caye and Placencia but will target other areas for growth as well. Marketing through collaborative efforts amongst the Government, B.T.B. and the private sector will be significantly more organized and targeted. We will solve the cruise port impasse without there having been first voted and allocated sufficient funds to cover the costs of the acquisition.

Information & Communications Technology- Belize already has all the essential tools of production necessary to enable an immensely successful information and communications technology sector particularly in the area of near shore outsourcing for North American businesses that can not only attract substantial foreign and local investment and generate foreign exchange

earnings but also create thousands of high paying jobs for Belizeans. These tools include such basic advantages as our language, our law, our people, our geographic closeness to North America compared to other outsourcing centers like India, the affordability and availability of real estate in Belize and, of course, bandwidth. Rather than stifle innovation and entrepreneurship with a monopolizing B.T.L. that restricts the use of VOIP and the internet, we will open up the internet, the information superhighway. We will reduce the cost of bandwidth to allow the I.C.T. sector to effectively compare and compete with other outsourcing centers in Latin America. Of course, this will mean VOIP for all of us as well. We will work along with the private sector with a view to establish e-commerce and outsourcing parks in population centers such as Belize City, Belmopan, Orange Walk and San Pedro. New investment incentive policies and laws will be established to organize and encourage investment in this sector as well. Our educational system will be enhanced throughout up to and through the tertiary level to properly train and bring skill and expertise to our population in the information and communications technology field. This will ultimately mean jobs not only in terms of telemarketing but also in more high paying areas such as software development, network design and systems management. With our other comparative advantages as mentioned, this sector will undoubtedly become one of the leading employers in Belize.

Agriculture- As the global economy begins to rebound, commodity prices increase. Agriculture will continue to be a primary area of focus for development and foreign exchange earnings as well as for food security. Earmarked funds for agriculture will be used to enhance infrastructure for agriculture rather than for politically driven non-agriculture related projects. The D.F.C. and other public financial institutions will certainly play a much larger role in providing cheaper financing to farmers. The D.F.C. doesn't need to be converted into a commercial bank. It needs to serve its role as a development bank and reduce its lending rates to give farmers the chance to build and grow rather than stifle them to death from the very start. To further assist farmers annually exposed to hurricane or other natural disasters, we will lobby with multilateral institutions like the World Bank to create a fund for the procurement of hurricane and disaster insurance for our farmers whether they may be in Corozal or Toledo, whether they produce banana or papaya.

Petroleum & Other Minerals- In many ways, since the first commercial discovery of oil in Belize, the petroleum sector has been a learning process. From the U.D.P. government, we have certainly learned what not to do. Crude oil as we all know is a major foreign exchange earner for Belize. However, it is also a non-renewable resource. Great care must be therefore given to maximize the proceeds therefrom and to how the proceeds of this non-renewable resource is handled. To maximize proceeds, instead of private back-room deals with political cronies who in turn sell their block licenses to make the profit that the government would have otherwise made, a transparent bidding process in accordance with known international norms will be implemented in the auctioning of blocks. This will ensure that the government maximizes its take from the outset. A petroleum fund was established under the last administration for the management of the proceeds derived. This U.D.P.

administration never utilized this structure for the long-term management and sustenance of these proceeds. Instead, it squandered these proceeds to meet severe budgetary shortfalls. Proceeds derived from petroleum should be used for the long-term benefit of the country not for short-term consumption.

Offshore Sector- The offshore sector since its conception has grown leaps and bounds over the years. It is foreign exchange earning sector which provides high paying jobs to its employees. Like tourism in many ways in the earlier years, most of its marketing has been undertaken solely by the private sector. While the government has passed laws introducing new products and while it has established an International Financial Services Commission to regulate and to market the sector, the Commission and the Government has done very little to market and promote this sector while collecting millions of US dollars in fees. Other jurisdictions with which Belize competes in this area, for example, the Cayman Islands, the British Virgin Islands and Seychelles consistently send their government representatives trekking across the globe to promote their offshore sector and or otherwise to negotiate tax treaties and the like. The offshore sector will be treated as what it is, a foreign exchange earning business. In this regards, it will get the support of the government. It will not get taxed any less favourably than those international competitors with which it competes and certainly not less favourably than other foreign exchange earning businesses in Belize. Perhaps even more importantly, we will collaborate with the private offshore sector to aggressively market and support the sector internationally.

Financial Sector- In part because of the economic slowdown and loss of confidence in the economy, the financial sector has taken its hits. Non-performing loan ratios have risen to abnormally high levels under the current administration. With new draconian rules having been recently introduced by the Central Bank, the financial sector without any action being taken will shift away from productive sector lending into consumer and residential lending. While interest rates should come down given that rates internationally are near or at 0%, lending to the productive sector will not come down in tandem. If not addressed, the financial sector will be effectively incentivized to lend to the very sectors that drain foreign exchange and at the same time effectively disincentivized to lend to the sectors that generate foreign exchange earnings and employment. These new rules will also have the spiraling effect of further flooding the already depressed market with additional foreclosure sales which will drive down the price of real estate thereby causing more foreclosures and thereupon further depressing the real estate market. These rules will be revisited to more properly align with the policy of economic growth through strategic incentives to foreign exchange earning sectors. Moreover, currently the banking system is so structured as to skew lending at cheaper rates and lower closing costs to non-residents engaging in foreign exchange earning businesses rather than to residents of Belize. These laws will be addressed with a view to ensure that residents will enjoy no less favourable costs and rates than non-resident investors in foreign exchange earning businesses. Furthermore, the current manner in which the Central Bank conducts its monetary policy creates an opportunity cost to banks of approximately 1.25% per annum on total deposit liabilities. Not surprisingly, the banks seek to

pass on this cost to borrowers by lending at high rates. While prudent regulation requires the use of some of these tools of monetary policy that do attract such opportunity costs, we will seek to ensure that these tools are utilized in such manner as to reduce the opportunity cost and the same time incentivize the grant of loans to foreign exchange earning businesses.

Real estate- Real estate is another attractive investment product Belize has to offer. Government t-bills earn 2%. With Central Bank's reduction in the savings rate floor, savings rate earned by pensioners and others are at all time lows in or around 2%. Term deposits are neither being accepted or being offered at around 4%. Real estate prices on the other hand have historically shown itself to generate abnormal rates of return. Over the past few years, we have seen the real estate market come to a virtual halt, partly to do with the global economic slowdown but also in part because of our own doing. The Lands Registry when the U.D.P. took office was virtually shut down for almost a year. This dealt a crippling blow to the real estate business in Belize. The Registry is now more bureaucratic and inefficient than ever. Moreover, on sale of real estate in Belize, you now have to pay 5% stamp duty, 12.5% on general sales tax. Not surprising, investment in real estate has slowed significantly. To maximize the opportunity that real estate offers to our economy, we will reduce the cost of investing in real estate. This includes minimizing the bureaucracy, the turn around time, improving efficiency in handling real estate transactions and re-engineering the tax structure to incentivize real estate development rather than real estate speculation.

IMMEDIATE ACTION: BELIZE EMERGENCY EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM (BEEP)

There is need for urgent and immediate action in respect of job creation. Analysis of the 2010 census reveals that the unemployment rate is 23.1% or some 30,000 unemployed. To properly tackle unemployment, we will need to create a public employment agency-Jobs Center. This Jobs Center will have several roles and purposes including:

Acting as a skills registry
Providing job search services
Providing workforce development services thru education, training and career pathway programs.

This jobs center will in effect serve as both a data center and a complementary market maker between the prospective employer and employee. It will identify the unemployed, their skill level and other attributes, efficiently place those who have the requisite skills already in demand and train others with a view to meet and supply the requisite skills being or to be demanded in the context of the overall national economic development policy. The jobs center will not wait for you to come to it, it will look for you. By getting people back to work, we maximize the benefits from the most valuable yet most under-utilized resource our country has to offer, our people. By focusing on sustainable employment, we assure sustainable economic development and growth.

In this regard there are some immediate policy decisions I would be prepared to advance for your consumption, analysis and discussion. This is essential because the next Government of Belize has to hit the ground running signaling clearly that Belize is ready and open for business.

Specific incentives on the table for

discussion would include:

Duty exemption on any capital goods and inputs into capital projects for the next 12 months.

Specific incentives for value added projects in forestry and food products including meats and grains.

A 12 month suspension of stamp duty on new loans for business expansion, capital good purchases, working capital targeting job creation.

Review the business tax regime with a view to facilitating the payment of business tax credits as a refund and recognizing the inherent inequity in the payment of business taxes on losses.

Drive the exports of grains, processed food and non-traditional agricultural exports by promoting a zero-rated GST platform for packaging and other products used in the processing of these export products.

The People's Money

With discretion there is power and power corrupts. To tackle corruption, which in turn reduces cost and ease of doing business as well as restores confidence in our laws and the economy, we will take a page out of the play book of the iconic former Singaporean prime minister Lee Kuan Yu by taking legislative measures to eliminate discretion through the ranks of the public sector up to the Minister and replace with eligibility standards.

A comprehensive review of the public sector will be undertaken to identify, consolidate and/or eliminate unnecessary bureaucratic processes with a view to improving efficiency and the ease of doing business in Belize.

One of the most hurtful things for ordinary people is seeing ministers, their close advisers and government officials jettisoning around the world, driving expensive SUVs with no limits on fuel spending while they literally have to live from hand to mouth.

We've actually got it backwards. Going into government should mean accepting five years of self-sacrifice because you are public-minded and inspired to make a difference. It shouldn't be a business and an opportunity to live high off tax payers' money for five years.

1. A cap should be put on all government international travel. Only the most essential travels should be approved and budgeted for. People should know how much of their money is being spent on international travel, who is going where and for what purpose.

2. Government officials who use government vehicles merely to get to and from work do not need their own government vehicles and fuel. Contract with the private sector to provide a small fleet of well maintained buses exclusively for government workers. Only public officers who have field work abroad the country or whose official duties legitimately require a government "ride" should have their own vehicles.

3. Remove extra layers of bureaucracy by doing away with municipal bodies or departments that create expense especially if an existing government department can carry out that function.

4. The Auditor General and house committees must be allowed to do their work. And so too must the Contractor General.

How do we Make Governments Listen

For close to 15 years now, political reform has been at the centre of political debates in Belize, yet successive governments seem to go off on their own agendas once comfortably in office. There is

Continued on page 12

ADDRESS TO BELIZE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PUP LEADER FRANCIS FONSECA

Continued from page 11

need for urgent meaningful reforms:

The P.U.P. will seek to enshrine in the Constitution a Referendum for any proposed amendment to our Constitution which in any way undercuts or degrades the fundamental rights and freedoms of the people.

The P.U.P. will reduce the term of office to four years and there will be a fixed date for elections in every four year cycle. We believe that four years is an adequate period for the electorate to be able to judge the performance or lack thereof of their elected representatives and to make an informed decision whether to renew the mandate or vote for a change. The fixed date for general elections will enhance greater public trust and participation in the democratic process.

The P.U.P. is committed to an elected Senate.

The composition of the Elections and Boundaries Commission will be reviewed to ensure that persons of high integrity and impartiality are appointed. The Chairperson should be appointed with the approval of the leaders of all parties represented in the House of Representatives. The Representation of the People's Act will be revised to ensure free and fair elections and to avoid such abuses and irregularities as we see taking place with the mass granting of instant citizenship without proper verification and the registering of many such persons on the voters list at addresses where they do not and never did reside.

A Freedom of the Press Law will guarantee free speech and protect whistle-blowers who expose abuse, acts of corruption and waste of resources in public office.

The Prevention of Corruption Act 2007 will be reinforced and the Integrity in Public Life legislation will be given teeth to sanction non-compliance with the requirement for disclosure of income, assets and liabilities by elected public officials.

The P.U.P. will introduce Campaign Finance legislation to grapple with the vexing problem of money in politics dominating and driving the system. Opposition parties including third parties such as the P.N.P., and V.I.P. will have access to fair, tax payer funded campaign funds.

Crime, Security and Justice

Allow me as well to say a few words about the vexing but critically important issues of Crime, Security and Justice. I readily concede that, for me, the most difficult challenge facing us is how to contain crime and arrest that swelling of the ranks of at-risk and unemployed youth.

In recent years, Belizeans have lived under the threat of violence and criminality on a scale unprecedented in the modern independent Belize. Law-abiding citizens live in fear. Whenever another murder or robbery or home invasion takes place, people's sense of security is negatively impacted; investment and economic growth is stymied. When so many of these crimes go undetected and where the conviction rate of accused criminals is so appallingly low, there is a deep-seated distrust of the police and the system of justice. To effectively address the scourge of violent crime, the P.U.P. will pursue a 4 step approach to national security:

Fixing the economy- is the first step towards reducing crime: robberies, mur-

der and violence have a direct correlation to rising unemployment and downturns in the economy;

Respect for the Rule of Law- the P.U.P. will uphold the Constitution as the Supreme Law of Belize and govern with respect for the equal rights of all. Elected officials including the Prime Minister and the Cabinet of Ministers must realize that they are servants of people and behave accordingly. No one is above the law. The arrogant abuse of power, corruption and any unjust enrichment in public life will be dealt with by the full force of the law.

Strengthening Law Enforcement- the P.U.P. acknowledges that a new approach to policing to effectively reduce the crime rate must be based on the citizens having trust and confidence in the police. Effective response mechanisms will be implemented to protect life and property, ensuring that more police officers are on the beat, more police booths properly manned and working with neighbourhood crime watch groups, tourist police and special constabulary. The use of security cameras in crime sensitive areas will be deployed.

The Gang Suppression Unit (G.S.U.) has lost the confidence of the Belizean people and will be replaced with a more effective anti-violence unit.

The P.U.P. will give full support to a reorganized and motivated police department with high professional standards, good public relations, better trained and equipped with improved conditions of service led by a competent Belizean Commissioner of Police who commands the respect of officers and the community at large.

The Forensic Science programme will be made fully operational to enable D.N.A. testing and an up to date ballistic registry.

We will wage an aggressive campaign against drug traffickers, recognizing that the transshipment and importation of cocaine and the proliferation of firearms

within Belize pose a serious threat to the security and welfare of the nation.

The services of law enforcement experts from abroad will be utilized as advisors and consultants without prejudice to our sovereignty and in practical acknowledgement of the enormous resources available to transnational criminals and organized crime.

The Criminal Code will be amended with a "stand your ground" provision for citizens to be justified in the defence of their home to use all necessary force to repel any intruder.

Justice- the reform of the Justice system continues to be a pressing issue. The independence of the Judiciary and the integrity of Judges and Magistrates must be jealously safeguarded and upheld.

The new P.U.P. administration will undertake a comprehensive programme to modernize the court system so as to achieve greater efficiency, speedier trials and more effective disposal of cases with a goal of eliminating the backlog of cases which makes a mockery of the Administration of Justice.

The reform of the prison service must continue. Convicted prisoners must be securely held. Measures to rehabilitate prisoners especially first time offenders must be balanced with programs for them to engage in productive work. Community service as alternative sentencing will be established on a more organized basis with proper supervision, especially for persons convicted of minor offences such as possession of a small quantity of marijuana.

The Belize Defence Force has a pivotal role to play in national security. A P.U.P. government will strengthen its capability both human and institutional to better patrol our borders to prevent and apprehend incursions into our territory of persons engaged in illegal farming and harvesting of xate and other forestry products.

The B.D.F. will also be kept engaged alongside the police in the fight against

organized crime.

An independent Citizens Complaints Bureau with necessary legal authority will be appointed to address allegations of abuse by security forces.

The sanctity of citizenship must be restored. With this in mind the P.U.P. will appoint an Independent Commission to review Immigration policy and laws and implement its recommendations. A law will be enacted to stop the issuance of nationality certificates (nationalization) three months before national and municipal elections.

I acknowledge that I have thrown a lot at you today, but I have sought to do so with a sense of purpose, direction and urgency. There is no time to waste!

I offer to you today a Government that will be engaged, focused and competent. As the leader of that Government I will at all times be prepared to sit with you, work with you, listen to you and learn from you. Working together we can put Belize back to work and make Belize work for all Belizeans.

My vision for Belize is one in which our children are born into strong functional families, receive a quality education which equips them with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required to find or create employment and lead lives of dignity while raising a family and preparing for a comfortable retirement.

This must be our shared vision. If Belize is to grow and develop, all of us, must be committed to a strong Belizean economy and society grounded in credible, practical plans and solutions to the social and economic challenges we face.

My Party and I are prepared to lead Belize on this new, exciting path. I ask for your support not only for March 7th, but more importantly on March 8th when the work begins.

Thank you and may God continue to Bless our beloved Belize.

FF/2/2012

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vote

DAVID HOY
PUP DELIVERS



The Independent

POLITICS

JOB CREATION AND ECONOMIC STABILIZATION

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.)

Unemployment, foreclosures and business closures are reported at record highs but the GOB shows a growth rate of 2.5% or more. Overnight tourism arrivals are at near record levels but the majority in that industry sees the industry in a definite slump. It would appear from this and other indicators that our economy is far from stable and is definitely not in recovery. We have also reached the point where the government payroll is around 40% of our total economy. The significance of this cannot be underestimated if we are to avoid becoming the Greece of Central America. We must address the issue of the size and cost of our government regardless of how uncomfortable it may be. With each additional program or Initiative the problem worsens. We simply cannot continue to expand the government or it will eventually consume the economy of the country. Politicians are very reluctant to address this dirty word of Retrenchment but the need to reduce government expenditures is real and apparent to all.

Job creation must be at the heart of any economic recovery plan. Private sector jobs, which are the only ones that count, are created by either expanding existing businesses or by the opening of new businesses. Infrastructure jobs are temporary and, unless the particular project was designed to create or aid in the creation of permanent jobs, offer only short-term relief and represent resources that could have been used to create permanent jobs which must be our number one objective at this time.

Job creation comes in small, medium and large. Small is the Mom and Pop store or small neighborhood business. This goes to the very foundations of the economy. It has been proven that micro financing works very efficiently in this type of job creation. It combats the capabilities poverty by empowering the cottage industries that are so important to us. Every small business helps someone get along and creates that person's job and quite possibly 2 or 3 others and has potential to grow and provide even more grassroots economic impact. Large businesses employ large amounts of workers but always involve foreign companies. At this time we are not highly regarded as a foreign investment venue as is evidenced by our declining foreign investment numbers. Medium sized business expansion and micro financing we can certainly fund internally through government policies if the will is there. Our performance in these areas and in controlling corruption will help restore the confidence of the foreign investor.

Government is financed to a large extent by private sector in the form of taxes we pay. The government is a nonproducing sector of our economy that uses up a large amount our human resources. Near-



ly one worker in five is a government employee based on around 75,000 actual work force and approximately 14,000 government workers whose pay makes up 40% of our recurrent budget. Many of these government employees are intelligent and well educated but are not employed in the critical area of expanding our tax base. Possibly by economic expansion policies we can lure some of these government employees into private sector where they can use their knowledge and expertise to help expand the tax base.

Based upon a Sustainable Development Plan as I have proposed various industries could be targeted for development by direct government investment into the production side of our economy. Qualified government employees could be offered the opportunity to leave public sector and join the productive sector by operating these new industrial installations. A possible example would be interlocking the agriculture industry with the aquaculture industry by manufacturing fish food from soybeans we grow instead of being totally dependent on imported fish food. A joint venture agreement could be reached with the employees of the installation to give ultimate ownership to private sector.

There is an assortment of opportunities available to create successful industries based on processing facilities for our raw materials by using government funds and by giving access to the markets by way of our International Highway. \$50 Million dollars in the Toledo district could have created hundreds of permanent jobs if properly used. Examples abound and each specific part of the country has resources that could be developed into job producing industries but this only becomes apparent in the context of a Sustainable Development Plan. The government must seek out these opportunities and fund them and adopt the Sustainable Development Plan and give the green light for private sector to start to implement the Infrastructure part of the Sustainable Development Plan for Belize as previously presented. The only way out of this mess is to work, work, work until we gone clear.

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 AREA REPRESENTATIVE

602-1616 SAN JUAN

State Of The Arts:

YOUTH VOICES RING OUT



By Katie Usher

Last year January, I was privileged to witness the launch of the Youth Voice Belize at the Image Factory in Belize City. The event was an immense success and featured some very talented Belizean poets. The powerful lyrics, which were creatively moulded from everyday words, sailed so effortlessly from young lips, pushed forward with a force which made us all stop and listen. Youth Voices Belize has been operating since then all over the country hosting film workshops, slam competitions and open mic sessions.

This project is a part of the Global Parish Project which is represented in Belize by Nyasha Laing. She gave me some information which gave me a deeper insight into what



Youth Voices is all about:

The Global Parish Project is a non-profit, community-based organization dedicated to the production and cross-cultural sharing of documentary stories in Belize. Global Parish's vision is to inspire a stronger sense of identity among Belizeans by nurturing the craft and appreciation of documentary storytelling through film and related forms of cultural expression. YOUTH VOICES is a two-year community arts platform that contributes to the empowerment and identity building of youth. Our Word Power workshops and open mic events provide a safe space for youth to develop writing and literacy skills, and to speak out about their social experiences and the cultural realities that impact them.

Surely the project has tried to live up to these objectives. Last summer, Youth Voices Belize invited two

filmmakers Kahlil Fantauzzi and Eli Fantauzzi who hosted a storytelling and documentary workshop. The workshop, I think, was excellent for the eager and talented young poets. Not only were they given the opportunity to work with the filmmakers and learn basic techniques in photography and film, but they were able to view a documentary done by Eli Fantauzzi which he filmed in El Salvador just prior to his visit to Belize.

In connection with the same workshop, Willie Perdomo, the author of "Nickel and Dimed", was invited to conduct a poetry reading series. Perdomo did presentations in Belize City, Belmopan and Dangriga. The young people who took part in the workshops did a wonderful presentation in the Institute of Mexico last August. This event, which was emceed by the radiant energy of Nyabingi Price, featured original pieces of poetry from the youths, to mention a few memorable performers: Micah 'Mighty Mic' Goodin, Gianni Martinez, Marika Zuniga and Williams Nduka and Willie Perdomo himself. It was surely a treat to hear Belizean stories, dreams and experiences expressed skilfully in the form poetry and spoken word.

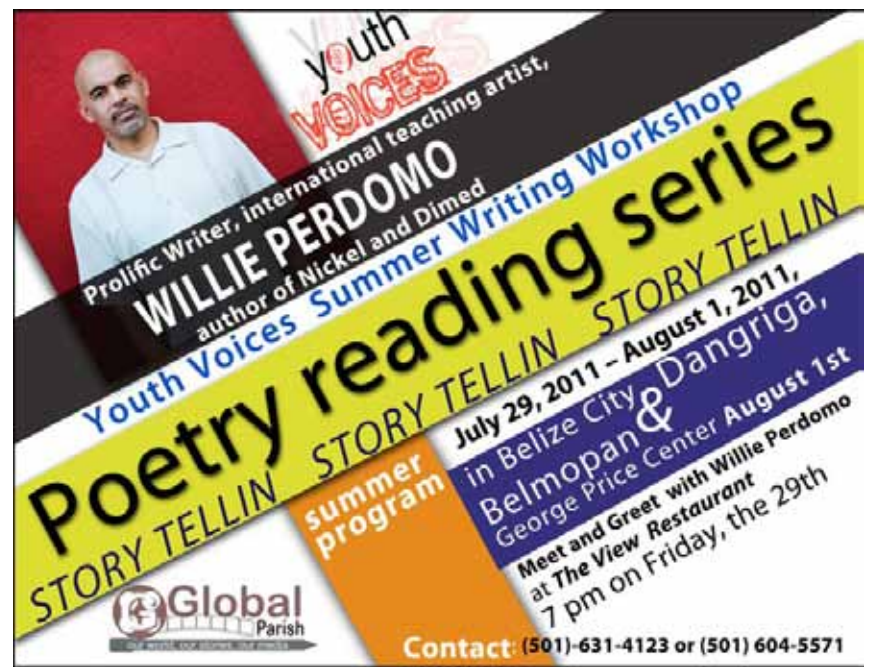
After the summer camp, Youth Voices Belize continued filming especially with their Southside Film Project, doing outreach in schools in Belize City, Orange Walk and Belmopan. They have now established ties with Wesley College and Muffles College.

In January of this year, to celebrate their one year anniversary, Youth Voices Belize presented their documentary film *I am Alive*. A press release sent out from Youth

Voices Belize in January stated that:

I am Alive, a short film, was created for the Youth and Community Transformation Project and explores the lives of South Side youths and the future they desire. This event will feature a short film screening, youth performances, community testimonials and entertainment for all ages. The event is part of a citywide effort to restore and bring life to the South Side.

Youth Voices Belize has big plans for 2012 including public service announcement production training, mini poetry slams, and more short film projects. The initiatives being proposed by Youth Voices Belize are definitely things that the youths can look forward to. The Youth Voices Belize offers a beautiful alternative to the crime, unemployment and the general frustration which many Belizean youths face daily. Here youths have a forum to discuss their ideas while garnering tools they can use to express their views, emotions and art.



Definitely the positive domino effect of the Youth Voices Belize can be witnessed in the brainchild project A.R.M.E.D. of a Youth Voice participant Micah "Mighty Mic" Goodin. A.R.M.E.D according to their facebook page is a tutoring club geared towards assisting students who may not otherwise have access to assistance. It states: ARMED envisions a society in which all high school students will be competent, disciplined and able to make it into any tertiary level educational institution across the length and breadth of this nation. Academics Returning Mentorship, Education and Discipline (ARMED), a non-profitable and non-governmental tutoring club located on SJCJ campus provides individualized, supplemental educational support to anyone in dire need of academic remediation, maintenance and enhancement.

For more information on the Youth Voices Belize, contact Stephanie Jimenez at 677-5571 or youthvoicesbelize@gmail.com, or visit their facebook page <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Youth-Voices-Belize/139008712819770?ref=t>.

San Pedro Politics

San Pedro Politics took back seat to the Carnival Celebrations in San Pedro with large groups of partiers painting any and everything in sight. Regardless the campaigning did go on but not with the same fervor. Elections are good for the economy as the parties spend money. Overheard a happy young man in a red shirt celebrating that he had a job to march in two parades. Most campaign workers are paid employees and little can be judged from the size of the parades, which were much smaller than in previous years. The election in San Pedro is markedly different this year as the two parties are not hurling insults and more at each other as has always been the case. This is noted by all and may signify a political maturity descending on the Island.

Friday 17 February on Good Morning San Pedro there was heated discussion of Mike Campbell's eligibility to run while holding British Citizenship. Mr. Campbell informed all of his history of legal opinions on the subject and of his consultations with the British High Commission and their legal opinion that his candidacy was legal. This touched off a firestorm of borderline personal attacks on Mr. Campbell and British Bashing by VIP Bobby Lopez and Dan Hector Silva by telephone where both claimed that by their interpretation of the constitution Mr. Campbell should not be allowed to run or sit and his doing so means that we

are not an independent country and are still subservient to England.

William (Mike) Campbell's nomination for Area Representative of Belize Rural South was accepted by the Elections and Boundaries Commission at 1:15 pm, Friday 17 February 2012 marking the first time in the history of Belize that a Dual National has been accepted to run for public office. Mr. Campbell in a separate interview reminded all that we hold up Barbados as a positive example and arguably the best Prime Minister they ever had was David Thompson who was a British born Dual National. Unfortunately for Barbados and the Caribbean Mr. Thompson succumbed to pancreatic cancer in October of 2010 and that Belize needs to take a more sophisticated and informed view of the world and our place in it.

Mr. Campbell unveiled his flag of Brown and Beige and noted how it represented the unity of the colors of the people of Belize and how we should all be united for our common upliftment as we are something much better and more powerful when we are united than when we stand apart. Mr. Campbell stated that his color would be Brown and urged all to vote.

The campaigns can be characterized as follows:

The new comer VIP Chairman Bobby Lopez offered the idea to make all

of San Pedro a Duty Free Zone. While launching attacks on Mr. Campbell as noted above and attacks on Patty Arceo and Manuel Heredia Jr. for not filing financial reports as required by law, he admits to purchasing lots in San Mateo that were intended for those who are underprivileged claiming he intends to live there when he retires to San Pedro in the immediate future in spite of his announced net worth of over \$6 million.

Incumbent Manuel Heredia Jr. points out his years of public service and his commitment to continue to help the people of San Pedro as he has in the past. He relies heavily on a party line supporting all UDP candidates without exception and calls attention to the economic realities of having to work with what little is available during economic hard times. He promised a new government school and a hospital as soon as the land is identified and agrees with the concept of community policing in the very near future. He stresses how he has tried to help all he could with land and necessary but always legal paperwork.

Ex Rep Patty Arceo also stresses her years of service to San Pedro and calls attention to the amount of improvements that happened under her 5 years as opposed to Jr's 9 year run as Area Rep of BRS. She emphasizes her ability to accomplish this again and the obvious benefits to San Pedro and Caye Caulker. She stresses the need for social programs and sports including better facilities in San Pedro. She stresses the neglect that San Pedro has had for the last 9 years under Manuel Heredia Jr and how the PUP is the answer to the problems of San Pedro.

Mr. Campbell stresses his qualifications and proven ability to work effec-

tively with either party. He states that much of the problem comes from only half of the Town working at a time and that we must all work together at the same time to get the results we desire. He states that if elected he will call for volunteers to serve on the committees and make sure that the composition is equitably distributed between the parties and independents in order to create cooperation between both parties for the good of BRS. He stated that all the candidates and parties have some good ideas and he intends to use them all but all other candidates are lacking in qualifications and experience necessary to solve the problems of Belize Rural South.

In general all candidates agree on the needs of San Pedro but only Mr. Campbell offers concrete realistic solutions to the problems such as street repair, job creation, law enforcement and immediate healthcare needs such as emergency medical evacuation at night. Mr. Lopez suggested we go on a "shifts" system to alleviate crowding in the schools without having to build more schools.

This election looks to be very close with still undecided voters weighing their options. Belize Rural South should be very interesting with one Independent candidate and candidates from three parties contesting the election for Area Rep. There is one Independent candidate as well as candidates from both major parties for Mayor. A strong Independent movement in the traditions of the San Pedro United Movement of the 80's making its presence felt.

Ramon Reyes Jr., an unsuccessful PUP candidate for Standard Bearer for Belize Rural South has thrown his support behind Manuel Heredia Jr. and now wears a red shirt.

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VOTE

SMITH, Francis

**VOTE
PUP**





SAN PEDRO BEAT

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

Harrison "Bin" Jacobs ...has been charged with the murder of Francis Alexander Figuerroa Cardenas on November 28th of last year in the San Juan Area of San Pedro Town. "Sometime before 5:40AM on Sunday, November 28th, police were called to the corner of Seaweed and Sand Piper Streets in the San Juan area of San Pedro Town. There, Police observed a dark skinned person of Creole descent, leaning in a sitting position on a blue concrete fence with what appeared to be a single gunshot wound to the head. The man who was known to police as Bejon Wade was later identified as 20 year old Francis Alexander Figuerroa Cardenas. Mr. Cardenas is of a Belize City address, but was reportedly working on Ambergris Caye." Mr. Jacobs has been remanded until his next appearance scheduled for 19 April 2012.

Inter-American Development Bank... held its 26th annual Meeting of the Governors of the Central American Isthmus and the Dominican Republic at Coco Beach on North Ambergris Caye. President Mr. Luis Alberto Moreno and Acting Prime Minister Gaspar Vega gave opening statements stressing the region's vulnerability to the economic turmoil in Europe and the slower than expected

US financial recovery. Mr. Moreno stressed the IDB's commitment to infrastructural and education projects that increase our growth capacities. Mr. Moreno stressed the need for planning in regards to climate change, as this region will be among the most affected areas in the world as the climate continues to change and its effects become more apparent. In an interview Mr. Moreno stated that Belize was paying 1.5% for 25 years on its loans but the technical services provided by the bank were more important than the cost of the loan.

Miguel Martinez... age 26 was found dead in his holding cell at the San Pedro Police Station Tuesday morning, 21 February 2012 after being detained by police earlier in the day for disorderly conduct in an intoxicated state. Mr. Martinez was found handcuffed and in his boxers. Reportedly his pants were found in front of the station. Relatives claim that witnesses saw the police beating Miguel in front of the station before taking him inside and that is why his pants were found outside. Word on the street is that the cell was emptied of other prisoners who were moved to a different cell and Miguel was placed in the cell and beaten to death. Police brutality charges are becoming

the norm in San Pedro. Mr. Martinez had been detained about a week and a half previous to this incident after erratic behavior led to him being sedated at the Polyclinic. Police claim there were no signs of violence upon the body, which has been transported to KMH. The police stated he was taken into custody and placed in the cell where he caused a disturbance, when they next checked on him he was found to be dead.

Caye Caulker News:

Melissa Chan... recently graduated from the University of Belize with a Bachelor's Degree in Education. Congratulations to Melissa

Chan.

Eduardo Arceo...the owner of Rose's Grill and Bar in Caye Caulker has recently been awarded an International Catering Award from The Trade Leaders Club in Madrid Spain at the 37th International Award For Tourist, Hotel and Catering Industry. Rose's is an excellent seafood restaurant on Caye Caulker and certainly worth a try on your next visit.

Blayd Christopher Vernon...is the proud winner of the Zone 5 Spelling Bee. This is the first time in 17 years a Caye Caulker student has won the spelling bee. Chelsea Rodriguez took fourth place. Congratulations to Blayd and Chelsea.



Blayd was mobbed by his school mates on his return to the Caye Caulker from San Pedro Town following the contest.

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The People's Referendum

Wednesday February 29, 2012

Should there be oil exploration and drilling in Belize's offshore?

No

Yes

BCSNH00001

Polling Stations

Area:	Belize City
Polling Stations	Collet/Zoe Ministry; Caribbean Shores Lions Den; Brodies Northern Highway; Lake I (Fergusson Digital Image, Partridge St.); Okeke's Juice (Freetown Road); NTUCB (3 Kut Avenue); Northern Fishermen Cooperatives; Port Loyola Muslim; Central American Ave; Empty Lot (North Front Street) & Mahogany Heights (La Democracia Community Center)

Area:	Corozal
Polling Stations	San Narciso; San Joaquin; Concepcion; Caledonia; Chunox; Sarteneja; Patchakan; San Andres; Corozal Town Andres Campos Civic Center & Corozal Town Central Park Band Stand

Area:	Orange Walk
Polling Stations	Central Park & Trial Farm Community Center

Area:	Stann Creek
Polling Stations	Sittee River; Silk Grass; Pomona; Middlesex; Steadfast; Seine Beight; Maya Creek; Georgetown; Placencia & Hummingbird Community Center

Area:	Cayo
Polling Stations	<p><u>San Ignacio:</u> Falcon Field Martin Galvez Stadium</p> <p><u>Santa Elena:</u> Basket Ball Field (Aguada Blvd)</p> <p><u>Benque:</u> BECOL Basket Ball Court</p> <p><u>Belmopan:</u> Belize Grass Roots Youth Empowerment Association (BGYEA) Office (Forest Drive)</p>

Area:	Toledo
Polling Stations	Central Park

Area:	San Pedro Town
Polling Stations	Central Park

Area:	Caye Caulker
Polling Stations	Central Park

Financial Contribution can be made at

Scotia Bank Account # 9138870

For more information join us on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/Belize.Coalition>

<https://www.facebook.com/The.Peoples.Referendum>

Or contact us:

227-2245/ 227-2704/227-2705

coalitionassist@apamo.net / ehernandez@oceana.org

CONCERNING CRIME: A SOLUTION EXISTS!

By Mike Campbell

The crime situation in Belize has escalated to the point where it has become the major topic in many conversations and personal safety has become a prime concern for many. Crime prevention, detection and successful prosecution require close cooperation between well-trained police officers and the community they serve. The community must trust the police to be honest and fair and the police must trust the community to be supportive and helpful. The cooperation between police and the community and the level of training of the police officers are the two most important factors in the effective policing of the community.

Throughout the Nation there is a distinct disconnect between the community and the police. This is true in spite of the obvious fact that the police are paid by the taxes of the community to provide protection and order necessary in a Civil Society. Police activities, or lack of, often form the butt of jokes by children and teens who let their disrespect be known at an early age. Indeed respect must be earned and it is difficult for a parent to instill respect for the law when it is sometimes difficult to respect those who are paid to enforce it. This is truly a serious problem and is no longer a laughing matter.

To move forward we must admit the obvious fact that the Belize Police Force in its present form is not capable of dealing with the rampant violent crime that is shaking the very foundations of our Nation. Conviction rates are abysmal and escapes from custody are common. The community has lost faith in the police to protect them from the worst elements of our society as they are paid to do. Crime is a community problem and can only be dealt with by the community. The root of this problem lies within the very preconceptions that have formed police policy and organization for all these years. We have never grown from a colonial police force to a community-based police force. The Belize Police Force is an extension of the colonial system where the Governor retained all power and communities were not allowed to police themselves furthering their dependence on the colonial government and making them much easier to control. Our very small population was also a major factor.

This structure and long established policies in the police force are primarily responsible for the disconnect between the police and those they are paid to serve and protect. Without effective cooperation between community and police crime control will never be possible. The long established policy of rotating

officers around the country has been our downfall. The preconception was that officers would become corrupted if allowed to stay in one place for too long. Of course this assumes that both the officers and the community they serve are basically dishonest. That should never be a problem with a well-trained officer.

Our police are never from the community they are assigned to and are usually forced to live in standard conditions. Having no real ties to the community they are regarded as outsiders and do not receive the full cooperation of the community they serve. Knowing they will be transferred in a few years there is no motivation to help the community and further they have no apparent responsibility for their actions to the community, only to the chain of command. The result is that the community does not trust the police and the police do not show respect for the community. They are trained to resist attempts at friendship with residents as it makes them supposedly more susceptible to corruption. The result is an unmotivated improperly trained police force that receives little support from the public in general. This antagonistic relationship between police and community is exploited by the criminal element.

The police must be part of the community as well as answerable to the community they serve in order to be effective. Police from top to bottom should be hired and fired by the particular community they serve based on their performance. We should have complete say as to who is policing our community and if they do not perform they must be replaced. Becoming a police officer is a commitment to the community. A police officer should love his community and regard the job as a permanent position. Ideally they will share the love of community that we all have and be motivated to do the best job. We have no opportunity to vet our police and know little about who is policing us. Officers who get in trouble in one way or the other are simply shuffled around to various unsuspecting communities often with tragic results. Whose fault is that?

If the police were answerable directly to the people of the communities they serve we would all be able to work together and bring our crime epidemic under control. The infection has spread from Belize City to infect all the towns. Our elected community leaders do not have the power to demand performance from our police even though it is our money that pays them. This is an unacceptable situation. The trips from Belmopan by various senior police, meetings with the various business groups and marches against crime are ineffective in an ever-widening spiral of violence. Starch, polish

and posturing will not win the war. We need well-trained, well paid, law enforcement professionals working directly with the community.

I notice one of the San Pedro neighborhood watches has hired armed guards and they are proving effective. If we cannot control our own police in the future all the neighborhood watches will employ armed guards for their neighborhoods. The next step will be untrained militias and private police forces. It is much better that we take control of our police and take back our towns and country from the criminal elements who are attacking our society with impunity.

Any thought that we are not capable of or responsible enough to handle our own police without help from Belmopan is ridiculous. Belmopan cannot control crime within the police force, much less our crime epidemic. The buck in the towns should stop at the Chief Police Officer and the Mayor and all police officers should be hired by the community they serve. If the Chief cannot perform or control his officers we must replace him and anyone else that is not giving 100% in our fight against crime. Under this system of community policing, police brutality would be rare and crooked cops would be dealt with quickly. We should not be taking direction from Belmopan as to how to proceed in our individual communities. There are many differences in our individual communities that necessitate different approaches to achieve effective law enforcement.

Our leaders have proven unable to meet the crisis and we the people of Belize must step up to the plate and take responsibility for our own security. It is time we fought back. I am confident we can do a much better job of managing our security than those currently charged with that task. As it is criminals laugh at the police and the courts and whose fault is that? Without dramatic changes we will not move forward.

GG police driver stole First Lady's ATM card and withdrew thousands from account!

Thursday, February 23, 2012

BELIZE CITY – Police appear to have an air tight case against one of their own, police constable #564 Rayon Martinez assigned to chauffeur the Governor General, Dr. Colville Young.

Police set up a sting to catch the culprit who had been withdrawing from Lady Norma Young's Scotia Bank account via the ATM machine.

Lady Young reported to police that her daughter had alerted her on Monday, December 5, 2011 of some unauthorized withdrawals from her account. After making inquiries, Lady Young recalled that the last time she had used her ATM card was on July 28, 2011 at the Scotia Bank Belmopan Branch. She also recalled that PC Rayon Martinez who was assigned driver for the Governor General assisted her in making the withdrawal. Since then, Lady Young reported, she has not been able to locate her card.

Twelve withdrawals were allegedly made from the account

totaling \$7,450.00. Police found the ATM card inside PC Martinez's black Toyota 4-Runner bearing license plate CY-C-29862.

Martinez was arrested on Tuesday, February 21, 2012 and slapped with twelve counts of theft charge.

Martinez was arraigned at the Belmopan Magistrate Court where he was offered bail which he met. His case has been set to commence on March 30, 2012.

"The Police Department stands resolute in enforcing its zero tolerance on crime especially from within its ranks," the Belize Police Department says.

But police officials may need to take another look at how they assign officers to the duty of chauffeuring and protecting Belize's head of state. Two previous officers who have taken up that assignment have run afoul of the law. In Martinez' case, though, he is the first officer we know of to be accused of stealing from his charges.

CLASSIFIEDS

LIQUOR LICENCE NOTICE

Notice is hereby given that George Ramirez is applying for Publican Special Liquor License to be operated at "Frogs Point Restaurant", Hopkins Village, Stann Creek District under the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Ordinance Revised Edition 2000.

Notice is hereby given that Gliria Mendoza is applying for Restaurant Liquor License to be operated at "El Talisman", 118 Barrack Road Belize City, under the Intoxicating Liquor Licensing Ordinance Revised Edition 2000.

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