

# The Independent

Reformer for the People

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Friday, March 23, 2007

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## Dead Man Walking -Barrow tells Musa: Just Go!

The action was not outside the House of Representatives as expected during the Budget Debate but inside. While the unions had a less than robust turnout for their protest, and some criticized the United Democratic Party for not joining them on the steps, inside the House the UDP was indeed fulfilling its role as Loyal Opposition. Party Leader Dean Barrow and Michael Finnegan translated the figures, and the promises, into language everyone could understand and made it clear just why Belizeans are being given no relief, and won't be in the foreseeable future. Barrow called the Prime Minister a "dead man walking" and implored him to return to the land of the living and give Belize back to Belizeans.

**Barrow feels Musa's pain: explaining Washington's behavior**  
Honorable Dean Barrow, (UDP) Party Leader, Queen Square Area Rep-

resentative: "It is simply that the Government in its corruption, waste, and ineptitude has dug itself too deep a hole, has imprisoned itself too fixedly in entanglements of its creditors and the international financial institutions. Without their seal of approval, this government could not even have survived for another year. These policy-based loans that we hear so much about Madam Speaker are being doled out one portion at a time.

"And to keep these life raft monies coming, the government is in fact a prisoner of the policy dictates, the enforced austerities, the barebones capital spending and the accompanying prescriptions for mass suffering, all these things have been visited on our poor Belize by the I.F.I.'s. That is why there is and can be no salary increase in this budget for the long suffering public officers.

"And they, in the face of the most cruel

and punitive inflation rates since Independence have had their wages frozen for years now, even as a creeping re-trenchment continues to decimate their ranks. That is why despite the new found oil money there is and can be no elimination of the revenue replacement duty on fuel so that the pump price to the consumer can fall and give people a break and so that the entire economy may be stimulated.

### Then he strikes to the heart of the matter

"This almost unimaginable contraction of crippling mega debt by this administration was not for any purposes of true national development, poverty alleviation, infrastructural development, education, health, tax relief, or personal improvements in the quality of life for the Belizean citizens. No Madam Speaker! Instead it was, as with all the millions realized from the sale of our

national assets, instead this huge contraction of burdensome unmanageable debt was principally for the self-aggrandisement of ministers and their families and their friends; the enrichment of their cronies such as the Novelos, Glenn Godfrey and Papi Pena and Bill Lindo and Arturo Lizarraga and Haisam Diab. The debt monies were spent on Intelco and Galleria Maya and San Lorenzo and Los Lagos and Mahogany Heights. The debt monies were spent as compensation for property owned by ministers and their drivers and their wives and their uncles and acquired by this Government for millions more than they were worth.

"Belize had first to default before there could be any question of restructuring. Together with the default there was this certification that we were so completely (Please Turn To Page 14) ■

## UDP Ladyville candidates promise action



The UDP "Candidate for Belize Rural Central Michael Huitchinson accompanied the "Action Team" for Village Council on house to house visits this week. From left to right Luciano Coc, Richard Lopez, Joel Rowley, Hutchinson and Mike Ortiz.

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# Letters to the Editor

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## Same differences

Dear Editor,

I only follow Belize politics from a distance, because I don't have a horse in that race and can't vote, but my impression over the past 15+ years is that there is even less difference between the PUP and the UDP than between Republicans and Democrats in the U.S.

In the big picture of world politics, from extreme right to extreme left, U.S. Republicans and Democrats are really quite close together in philosophies. Yet they do stand for significant differences in their views about the role of government. In general, Democrats think that government has a role in addressing inequalities and helping the less fortunate, while Republicans lean toward a more market-oriented economy and less government influence (except in social areas, where Republicans generally feel that Daddy knows best.)

BUT ... in Belize, really what are the philosophical differences between the PUP and UDP?

It used to be that the UDP was considered more business-oriented, a little more conservative than the PUP. And, certainly, in the old days of George Price the PUP was more populist, sort of a soft-sell, ascetic version of the Hugo Chavez approach. But in the last 10 or 15 years, what's the diff?

There are differences in personalities, and differences (at least in public statements) about corruption, debt, spending, governmental ethics, etc. But in recent years the PUP has been very pro-business, pro-growth supporting tourism, doing favors for "big business" (by Belize standards).

As an outsider, I just see the difference as kind of a tribal thing - our guys (whichever party you're in) against dem

guys. There are PUP villages, UDP vil- lages, and there are some ethnic or racial differences, true. Political patronage is the main thing.

But I don't see significantly different visions for Belize from either party. I don't see differences in fiscal policy, differences in views toward markets, differences in views about social issues.

Would somebody please explain to me what the core PHILOSOPHICAL, SOCIAL and ECONOMIC differences in the parties are? Maybe just in a few words: the PUP stands for A, B and C, while the UDP stands for D, E, and F.

Signed,  
Lan Sluder

## Take your lumps

Dear Editor:

Please allow me space in you paper to comment on a noticeable trend in your young and informative newspaper.


It is very noticeable, in most of your articles where your political commen- tators and input appear, that you enjoy **dumping** the UDP in the same dirty bag as the PUP. Now, I am familiar with most of the personalities running your paper and I consider each to be good and well meaning Belizeans. But, I believe in advancing your paper's mission to build awareness and support for a third party and for Belizean reform, you appear to be always **lumping** the UDP with the spoilt PUP even when there is no factual reason to do so. I guess that it's done for you to gain more sympathy for the third party concept.

The above being said, I would like to put forward my personal opinion on some of the proposed reforms you have mentioned. Your idea of an elected senate in my humble opinion is not well

thought out, in the context of the con- stitution and the reality of political par- ties. For it is reasonable to suggest that if we allow for an elected senate, the first organizations to compete for the seats would be political parties, even "third" parties. So to be practical, it is conceivable that all the senate seats could be won by a very popular party. So it is reasonable to believe that one party could still control both the House and the Senate. Bingo ... we are back to square one as politicians have ad- hered to party discipline.

A more practical way, in my opinion again, would be to increase the number of independent senators, who possess experience and are not beholden to any- one.... we have a large pool of senior independent people out there. They would, by design, *always* outnumber the government senators, which will re- sult in removing the control of the sen- ate out of the hands of *any* government.

The idea of reducing the government's term from 5 years to 4 years would have my support. With 15 years under my belt as an Area Representative, I can be a witness to the stress setting in the system can have on a person and on the government. On the issue of pro- portional representation, I would not be a supporter. The real issue is of per- sonal integrity and high moral values, not numbers. Moreover, countries with pro- portional representation have no fewer headaches that we do. Some of them are a little worse off in good governance

On the issue of raising the public ser- vice retirement age from 55 to 62, this would a great idea; as we would keep our investment in training them within our services longer and encourage greater continuity in the public service. I believe that your idea of calling a referendum (Please Turn To Page 15) 

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# Easter Week



**By: Trevor Vernon**

Easter is fast approaching and families with varying degrees of resources are making plans. We might not have off the entire *Semana Santa* like the rest of Latin America, and you will only see religious processions in certain indigenous communities, but Easter has traditionally been a significant long holiday weekend in Belize. It still retains some religious overtones that have been diluted down by "political correctness" or "respect for diversity."

The more affluent Belizean families go abroad to their foreign condos and swimming pooled mansions while the people they have made their money

off of stay in their humble homes and follow the bicycle race on Holy Saturday. At least, those were the traditional extremes. These days some of the most corrupt amongst us will go to Europe, Asia, Hawaii and elsewhere for the holidays; the lesser beneficiaries will end up in Cancun, Miami, Houston and places closer.

Almost all the political directorate will be away; those politicians who remain are invariably the ones who can't get on a plane. Or should I say, can't get past immigration on the other side? This includes some pretty well-heeled "businesspeople" who are part and parcel of this blatantly corrupt regime. But limited travel options are apparently a small price to pay for unlimited wealth. International notoriety a fair exchange for local immunity from prosecution...

For the rest of us, things are so expensive in this overtaxed country it's actually less expensive to take

your family to Cancun or somewhere along the Mexican Riviera Maya than go to the cayes or local resorts. In Mexico, gasoline prices and hotel accommodations are less than half of what they stick us with here. Chetumal is the cheapest of all and has all the modern conveniences...except with the Sam's Club and Mall of the Americas it's easy to overspend.

Chet would be good, if it were my cup of tea...considering how much you save on groceries and household item purchases. But I love the Caribbean Sea. I need to be on the water, in a boat that I am somewhat in control of, to truly enjoy the Easter weekend. To indulge this childhood fantasy I will pay the price of ridiculously overtaxed fuels, omnipresent GST (Great Said Tax) and forgo Chetumal shopping to truly enjoy what this country has to offer, reef-wise... as I am not into beef country this time of year.

Yes, despite Said & Co.'s attempts to cut up the jewel and give away the choicest cuts to their friends, families and cronies, Belize still has a lot to treasure and a lot of local people who appreciate her.

For me, and so many others including friends and family abroad, Belize will always be home and the Easter weekend is as down home as it gets. For us, it's not about religious devotion or obscene displays of wealth, power, political connections, or any combination thereof. It is about celebrating our country and our unique Belize-ness.

Whatever the cost of doing that this year, Musa and his gang won't be running me out of town, at Easter or anytime else; I am here to stay and have budgeted for it. Just like so many of you. They can take the money and run it abroad quite easily these days; but, God knows they are not welcomed here anymore, anyway..

## Andy Palacio & the Garifuna Collective release *Watina*



Paul Nabor and Andy Palacio performing together. photo courtesy Richard Holder

Stonetree Records is proud to present Andy Palacio's remarkable new album featuring an all-star, multigenerationallineup of musicians. Five years in the making, *Watina* is infused with contemporary influences, enchanting rhythms, powerful melodies and a deep soulfulness that is rooted in the rich musical traditions of the Garifuna culture. Belizean icon, Andy Palacio, leads the Garifuna Collective and delivers a monumental tribute to this unique and inspiring culture.

The initial recording sessions took place over a several-month period in an improvised studio inside a thatch-roofed house by the sea in Hopkins Village. It

was an informal environment, where the musicians spent many hours playing together late into the night, honing the arrangements of the songs that would eventually end up on this album. They were inspired by a wide range of Garifuna styles, such as the Latin-influenced Paranda, the sacred Dugu, Punta and Gunjei rhythms. While the traditions provided the inspiration, the musicians also added contemporary elements that helped give the songs relevance to their modern context. Following the sessions, Ivan Duran and AI Ovando worked tirelessly back at the Stonetree studio in Benque Viejo to craft what is surely (Please Turn To Page 14) ■



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# Hard Adventure



**By: Karla Heusner Vernon**

"Welcome aboard everyone, the ride to Half Moon Caye Natural Monument will be about two hours and fifteen minutes, so everyone sit back and relax," announced our guide with a broad smile and wave of his well tanned arm.

Two whole hours! Wow, imagine having that much time to myself. No work, no kids, no traffic or potholes. Just smooth sailing at sea. I should have brought a book or something.

I leaned over to a colleague also on the PACT media trip, "Should have brought my laptop, I could have been doing a column."



*Boobies nesting in the trees on Half Moon Caye.*

"Yeah," she laughed, "I have lots of stuff I could be proofreading."

But within moments we were no longer laughing, or thinking two hours was a welcome spate of time. It was an overcast, windy day and the boat was starting to bounce up and down.

"Hmm, rough already and we are not even in the blue yet," observed a member of the Audubon team, "just wait until we get outside reef!" he laughed.

Those of us who had never been past

the reef in our lives looked at each other. What had we unwittingly signed up for? But we assured ourselves that if the veterans of the trip thought it was grand fun, it would be. After all, people come from all over the world to see the red footed booby birds and dive the Blue Hole. So it had to be worth a little light chop to choppy.

"Want some sunscreen?" an amiable PACT member asked me.

"What SPF is that?" another guy

asked him. "50." Answered the first. "Cho! Baby stuff," one of the dive masters chimed in whipping out a bright yellow tube of goo. "This here is SPF 98. Totally blocks the sun, by the end of the day your skin is five shades LIGHTER than when you left home. To God."

"Mine is even better," a woman next to me whispered. "SPF 700 with green tea extract. Completely reverses the aging process, when you get to the caye you'll be 18 again."

She did indeed look youthful. "Mind if I borrow some?" I asked her. "Not at all," she beamed.

She reached over to hand me the sunblock with her free hand, hanging onto a rail for dear life with the other, for by now we were raising off the seat cushions a few inches or so with every big wave. Waves we could see coming at us in the distance like giant blue whales.

"Whoo-hoo!" Whooped one of the boat attendants. He nimbly jumped

(Please Turn To Page 13) 

## The Lighter Side of the Ruta Maya



*Robert Lopez of Hummingbird Rattan and his happy crew may not have finished first but they are still VIPs.*



# PACT invests in nature conservation

## safeguards the future of Tourism, Fishing, Forestry & Agriculture

**By William G. Ysaguirre**

Tourism has become the country's fastest growing industry, providing jobs for 25% of working Belizeans. Protecting wildlife and Belize's natural beauty translates into big bucks.

Not everyone is on the same page, as witness the senseless attacks on a Green Kingfisher and the even rarer Herring Gull, which were reported by the Belize Audubon Society on Chanel 5's recent newscast.

The Protected Areas Conservation Trust is working to change these attitudes; however, and to get more Belizeans to acknowledge the economic importance of protecting the environment. Belize Audubon Society is spearheading this educational campaign by inviting the public on a free bird tour in Belize City at six on Sunday morning.

The Audubon Society is not the only organization to benefit from PACT funds, the PACT foundation is inviting organizations involved in nature conservation to submit proposals to receive funding from



PACT Director Valdemar Andrade presents information on the organization.

to explain in a breakfast media briefing at the Radisson on Monday, March 5. PACT was also formed to create a national entity for conservation which could finance consultation workshops and visitor surveys.

To date, PACT has awarded 137 grants, totaling BZ \$7,748,193.38 from January 1996 to January 2007. These were

over \$100,000.

Among PACT's accomplishments are the 36 protected areas (approximately 40% of the system) supported by grants and the 31 NGOs, Government Departments and associations which have benefited from the grants program. In the 10 years of PACT's existence its staff has gained experience in managing grants. They have built a network for dialogue with NGO's and CBO's throughout the country and get active Support from Government policies: such as the Debt for Nature Swap and the Protected Areas Policy and planning. PACT plays a coordinating role in international alliances with the MAR Fund, RedLAC, the International

Nature Conservation Union (IUCN). It also uses its partnership with the Global Environmental Fund (GEF/SGP), with CI, Oak, The Nature Conservancy, and MAR Fund to leverage funding for local NGOs.

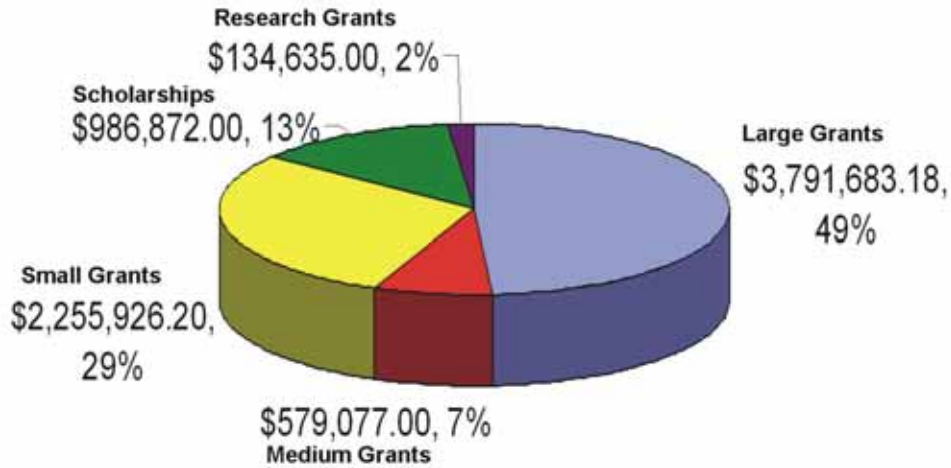
- PACT funds activities such as
- the demarcation of boundaries
  - research
  - institutional strengthening
  - infrastructure development
  - scholarships/short-term training
  - promotional materials
  - environmental education
  - monitoring activities
- and minimal capital/office equipment

PACT's operating capitalization for the 2005/06 Fiscal year was approximately BZ\$6,000,000 which is divided in revolving, sinking, and endowment funds. It is PACT policy that the Endowment Fund should receive no less than 5% of all revenues in any given fiscal year and for this year the Endowment Fund was BZ\$2,700,000. Its primary objective is to provide grants for the management, conservation, development of protected areas and wildlife species.

**Sources of PACT Funds**

PACT gets funded through the US \$3.75 Conservation Fee paid by tourists on their departure, 20% of the Cruise Ship Passenger Head

**Distribution of PACT Grants**

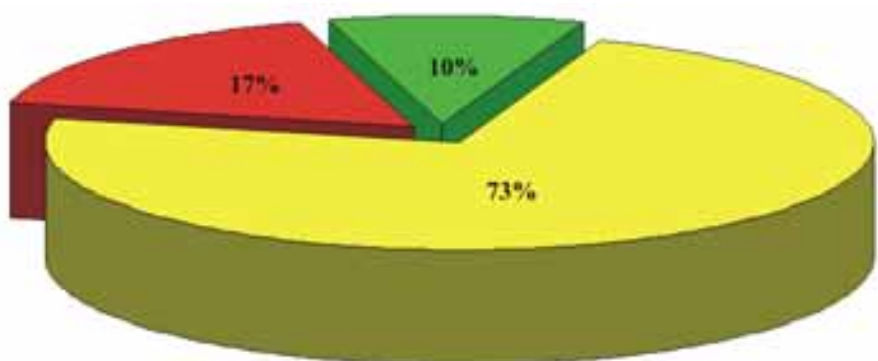


PACT. Priority will be given to protected areas management including education, training, research and equipment. Grants are limited to a maximum of \$40,000 for one year, and application forms are available from the PACT office or may be downloaded from their website [www.pactbelize.org](http://www.pactbelize.org).

PACT's raison d'etre is to provide a sustainable financing mechanism to fund the Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) involved in nature conservation, as PACT Executive Director Valdemar Andrade was at pains

- 4 Large Grants, all ongoing totaling over \$3.7 million
- 2 Medium Grants, 1 ongoing, totaling over \$500,000
- 75 Small Grants, 10 ongoing, totaling over \$2.2 million

PACT also recognises the importance of maintaining and building a cadre of professionals trained in natural resource management and scientific research. It has awarded 46 Scholarships, 1 long term training and 2 Professional Development Grants, totaling over \$900,000 and 7 Research Grants, 6 ongoing, totaling



Most PACT funding 73% goes to grants, with 17% for operations and only 10% for staff salaries.

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# TOO WILD FOR WORDS!

## The Belize Harpy Eagle Restoration Programme is Soaring!!!

By Sharon Matola

Once upon a time, and not all that long ago, the word “Harpy Eagle” didn’t mean very much to many people living in Belize.

That’s all changed!! Why? In early 2003, The Belize Zoo, working with The Peregrine Fund and with support from the Government of Belize, put together a “flight plan” and brought 4 young Harpy Eagles, captive bred in Panama, to Belize. The plan was to release these huge raptors back into the forests where they once lived..

Why so rare? Harpy Eagles are one of the 4 largest eagles in the world. Their huge talons show all that they are fearsome flying tropical forest predators. It has been the sad fate of the Harpy to be persecuted. Since this massive eagle looks so fierce, their appearance has often led to a bad and



sad meeting with a shotgun.

The aim of the Belize Harpy Eagle Restoration Program was to bring the birds back home, and also, to work to foster a strong awareness about their importance here in Belize.

The forests of Rio Bravo (with assistance from Programme for Belize), were targeted for the new Harpy home. It is good forest! Lots for a Harpy Eagle to eat there!

Tracking the released eagles with radio-telemetry, it has been found that their preferred dinner is Coatimundi, followed by Kinkajou and Anteater. However, the eagles have also preyed upon snakes, Grey Fox and Porcupine.

To assist the Restoration effort, the Belize Zoo worked to build up a dynamic education program, bringing about a greater awareness on behalf of this rare bird of prey. The feath-

ered “star” of the zoo’s program is none other than “Panama the Harpy Eagle”. “Panama” was captive bred with the other eagles, however, when hatched, it was discovered that he had a badly damaged eye. As he was unable to be released into the wild, “Panama” came to The Belize Zoo as a premier education bird. And what an important job “Panama” has at the zoo!

He educates zoo visitors about the Harpy Eagle, and the vital role they play in our forest ecology. At “Panama”’s roomy exhibit, visitors also learn about the Belize Harpy Eagle Restoration program. What a double-barrel dose of cool education for all! This combined effort, now on-going for over 4 years, has truly made the Harpy Eagle a solidly known and well-loved bird in Belize.

# PACT invests in nature conservation

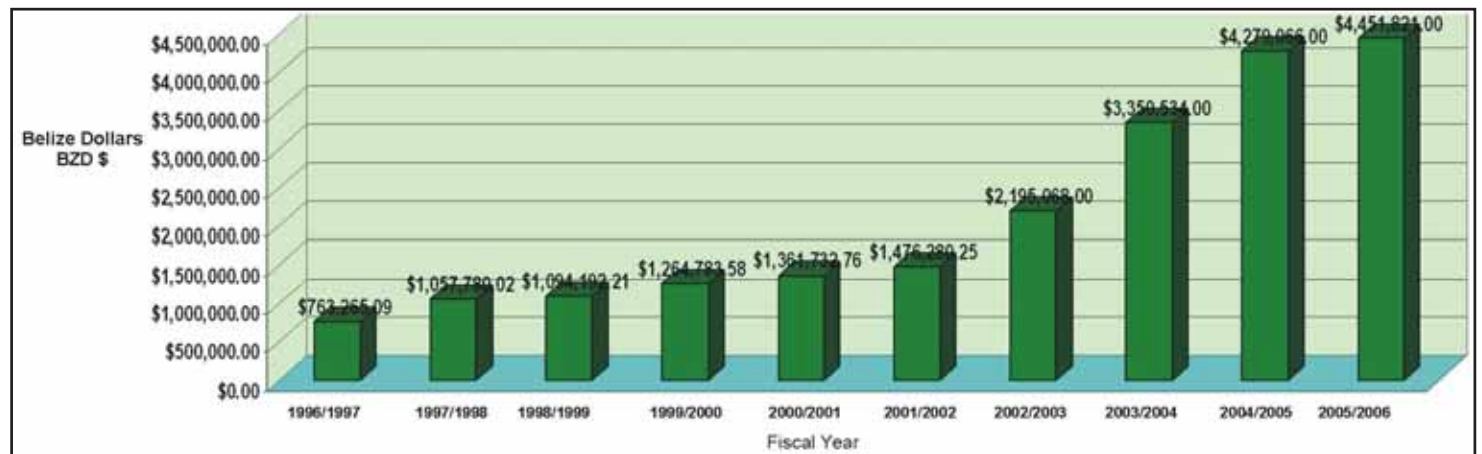
(Continued From Page 5)

Tax, investments and individual donations.

PACT’s finances are distributed between the Trust Fund and the Endowment fund

Operational expenses and grants are disbursed from the Trust fund. PACT’s revenue distribution policy is to spend 60% on Grants, 20% for operational expenses and 20% on staff salaries and benefits. The present actual distribution is 71% for Grants, 17% for operational expenses and only 10% for staff.

Total Revenues have grown from \$1,278,644 in 2000, \$1,422,489



Total Revenues have grown from \$763,265 in 1996/97 to \$4,451,821 in 2006.

in 2001, in \$1,476,280 2002, \$2,193,914 in 2003, \$3,350,534 in 2004, \$4,279,066 in 2005 to \$4,451,821 in 2006.

### Money Management

The trust fund is managed through an Interim audit at half year and a full audit at end of year by an independent internationally affiliated audit firm. A Management team drafts the budget, based on projects in the pipeline and historical trends of revenue.

Individual departments defend their budget to management and staff, and the budget is reviewed and approved by a Board. Projects are externally evaluated and the organization takes a proactive and responsive approaches to grant funding

The organization has plans for a more autonomous Board through new legislation, the development of a fund-raising campaign and a national environmental education strategy.

To see the results of this funding at work, representatives of 8 media houses, including four TV stations toured the Half Moon Caye Park managed by the Belize Audubon Society on Monday,

March 5. They learned about its importance as a habitat for the Red-footed Booby bird (*Sula sula*) and 98 other species of birds who have been identified on the caye, some 77 of which are migrants; with ospreys, mangrove warblers and white crowned pigeons being the regulars.

They later snorkeled the Blue Hole, a deep sink hole which is part of the Lighthouse Reef atoll.

Sharon Perera of PACT also briefed the media on the upcoming PACT Challenge 2007, which this year targets marine sustainability. The 2006 PACT challenge had seen teams sharing an adventure hike of the Chiquibul Forest Reserve. This year’s challenge will feature three teams kayaking, snorkeling and diving in a marine adventure through Belize’s Barrier reef system in June. The objective is to generate public awareness and concern about preserving Belize’s marine resources for the economic viability of the tourism and fishing industries and for future generations of Belizeans.



Half Moon Caye is an important refuge for the booby bird.



# Lessons from a Benefactor

**By Richard Harrison**

*Henry Edward Ernest Victor Bliss, commonly known as Baron Bliss (16 February 1869 – 9 March 1926), was a-British born traveller who willed some two million US dollars to a trust fund for the benefit of the citizens of what was then the colony of British Honduras, now Belize.*

*The Bliss Institute (a performing arts centre) was part of the benefits from this endowment, as were the city's Bliss Lighthouse (where Bliss's tomb is located), the Bliss School of Nursing, and various other medical facilities around the country.*

*Belize celebrates Baron Bliss Day each March 9 in his honour.*

*Bliss's early personal history as well as the origin of his "Baron" title is uncertain. He styled himself "Fourth Baron Bliss of the Kingdom of Portugal"; there is some speculation that the original Portuguese title was Baron de Barrato. Other sources say that his family surname was originally Barretts. He lived in the Bahamas, Trinidad and Jamaica for some years before moving to Belize shortly before his death.*

The above excerpt was taken from Wikipedia. What can Belize learn from the story of Baron Bliss?

**1. CHARITY** – the Baron could have left his wealth to his family, his country of origin, his workers or any entity other than Belize closer to his genes. He chose to leave it for Belize, which was closer to his heart. This is a great act of charity, and the beneficiaries are generations of Belizeans. By expressing this great act of charity towards Belize, was he reacting to the great act of charity with which the people of Belize received their guests at that time? No matter how poor Belize people were, they always smiled and welcomed guests, they always had a cup of local brew to share, a small bite to eat and a cheerful story to share.

**2. NATURAL BEAUTY** – accordingly, Baron Bliss fell in love with the natural beauty with which Belize was blessed. Being beautiful obviously made it easier for him to fall in love with Belize, and to leave a large part of his wealth for her. Belize's pristine waters, pleasant sub-tropical atmosphere, cleanly livable surroundings and lush inland forests are what give it natural beauty.


**3. WILL** – the will of this charitable benefactor has been managed by reputable trust managers over many decades. In Belize, its representative is the Governor General, who represents the Queen of England as the Head of State. The principal of the fund has remained intact until this day, and the interests earned have been made available to Belize for the purpose of fulfill-

ing the will of the benefactor. This is certainly a chapter of excellence in the book of Belizean history.

What can Belize do to celebrate the life of Baron Bliss?

**1. BELIZE DAY OF CHARITY**

– Belize should declare March 9 as BARON BLISS DAY - DAY OF CHARITY. I am certain that the Baron did not intend for his will to provide food for generations of Belizean children. I am certain he did not intend for his gift

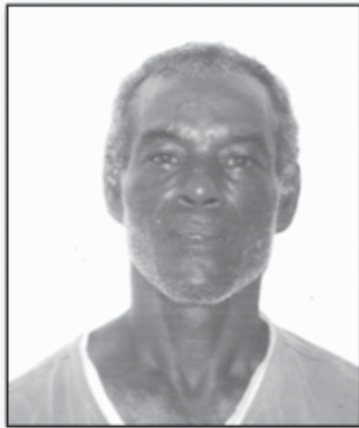
to be the one act of charity that our country would ever see. Belizeans of every generation should be allowed to build on the principal left by the Baron. Every year, leading up to March 9, (Please Turn To Page 8) 



**Carolee Hecker**



**Martin Jimenez**



**Reginald Williams**

## Strong Independent Team for Ladyville Village Council



**Sharon Turton  
for  
Chairlady**



**Odessa Gibson**



**Hosni Turton**



**Fernando Leal**

*We will:*

- *Lobby Government for the FULL participation of the council in the development of the village;*
- *Ensure proper garbage collection at all times;*
- *Seek employment for residents;*
- *Provide support to the elderly and the needy;*
- *Improve the promotion of sports (organize and get sponsorship for a semi-pro football team);*
- *Monitor the performance of the Ministry of Works to ensure timely repairs of streets in the village;*
- *Work with the Police and residents to address the crime problems;*
- *Lobby for benefits for students at all levels;*
- *Lobby Government for Improved healthcare in the village.*

*Contact me at: 621-7281*

# April 1st, Election Day!



# Ecowatch - How can you help protect Belize?

## by Advocating for Belize

**By: Nadja Chamberlain**

Elections are coming up. Existing parties are preparing their new platforms while new parties are formulating how they want to present themselves. Now is when you can make a difference by instructing these entities in how you expect them to protect Belize. Before one can be a successful advocate, one needs to understand what is happening now and what can be done to steer a better course.

You have watched as unplanned and poorly planned development has changed and is changing the character and environment of your area. You have wondered how to have a say in what is happening. This short series of articles will address critical problems in the existing planning process for the development of Belize, and will then give you specific steps you can follow to address

these problems and bring them to the attention of the decision makers.

At present there are local and foreign investors and developers who are taking advantage of the fact that the land in Belize is still comparatively cheap, labor is comparatively cheap, it is often easy to get close to political entities that can ease the way past government laws and regulations, enforcement of environmental laws is non-existent in many cases, fines are almost unheard of or of little consequence, there is little or no environmental planning required, and these projects are being turned over at prices equal to what the going prices are for similar developments in more developed countries. Belize is being sold out and the sellers are laughing all the way to their banks.....and laughing at Belize.

We must begin with serious environ-

mental planning. Belize has a small enough land area and a small enough population that environmental planning for the entire country is doable. Environmental planning is a holistic process that is complex in its structure yet simple in its logic. It requires not only critical information regarding the natural systems and functions but knowledge of and consideration for the needs of humans. Environmental planning is a web where interrelationships between humans and the environment are woven together. For environmental planning to work, other needed information includes, but is not limited to, these areas: history, archaeology, populations, demographics, culture, social structure, employment opportunities, health, laws, law enforcement, government, and even the future effects of climate change. Environmental planning cannot take place in a vacuum; the impacts of these other needs must be considered — otherwise the results of the planning will not work

in the long term.

Knowledge of the environment must start with base data regarding the natural systems to

enable decisions to be made on what impacts can be absorbed by a natural system and allow it to continue to fully function. Functioning on the edge of collapse is not the answer. Belize has access to good base data regarding systems in general and systems, plants and animals that are found in Belize. This data is presently being placed, and will continue to be placed as new information is gathered, in a large database that can be accessed on the Internet.

Subsequent articles will demonstrate examples of good environmental planning, give ideas for careful development, explain the existing planning process, tell of needed changes in the existing planning process and, lastly, give suggestions for becoming an advocate for the environment and influencing decision makers.

# Lessons from a Benefactor

➡ (Continued From Page 7)

Belize (through a Governor General Appeal) should open up and promote an avenue for all Belizeans to make at least BZ\$1 voluntary contribution to this fund; as an act of charity to future generations of Belizeans. We can see the very real benefits of this charity, when the interest it earned was used in such projects at the Baron Bliss School of Nursing, the Bliss Institute and other such socially oriented capital infrastructure. As a people, we should become interested in seeing what the interest has been used for over the last 20 years, and offer our ideas on how it should be used during the ensuing 20 years. That is, the fund would take on a generational dimension, responding to the socially-oriented capital infrastructure needs of the times.

## 2. BELIZE – INNOCENT AND PURE.

Belize should set a NATIONAL VISION enshrined in our constitution and given meaning via a perpetual national program entitled BELIZE – INNOCENT AND PURE, aimed at maintaining and enhancing the country's natural beauty. Belize should invest in expanding the office of the Governor General, so that it can define and then promote the VISION, to provide oversight which will help to coordinate all our human and capital resources that should be channeled towards specific objectives in this regard. No less than 10% of our national budget should be allocated for this purpose. If you live in a beautiful place, no matter how poor you might be, you will be awed with every splendid

sunrise and grateful to live every breath of a robust life. Indeed, the waters, air and forests can provide abundant natural foods for all. By maintaining and enhancing our country's natural beauty, we will be guaranteeing the welfare of those less fortunate among us. It is the best insurance against abject poverty. We need to set a clear vision for our citizens and institutions, write sensible human-oriented environmental laws and standards, enforce them strictly with appropriate policing using a penalties and rewards system, and allocate appropriate resources to repair any damages that have been done or to invest in enhancement such as reforestation or riparian forests, etc. This program can be used as the basis for a wholesome and meaningful marketing of our tourism and industry offers. Belize's natural beauty


should be able to attract many more gifts to its future generations.

## 3. BELIZE – THE WILL OF EXCELLENCE.

Belize should set up an institute to promote excellence in all areas of Belizean life. Its work should be commissioned by a Statutory Board comprised of business, religious, government and civil society leaders. The work of this institute should be research oriented, able to scientifically study all aspects of Belizean life, to work along with national institutions and their stakeholders in setting up their standards of excellence, and to be able to rate their performance vis-à-vis those standards. It should be able to identify areas of strength and weakness, and help our institutions to program for phased improvements in their standard of excellence. If should

focus on a different set of national institutions over three year periods, so as to have focus and effectively utilize the resources available. It should be able to carry a score card for our principal institutions, so that the public can be aware of and appreciate improvements being made. This institute should be financed with no less than 5% of our national budget, with proportional amounts coming from our existing budgets for education, health, defense, culture and constituency funds.

The long and short of this essay is that we should seek to learn lessons from the past which can allow us to **build** a better future for the generations to come. This is the inherent lesson from the will of a benefactor who chooses to grant us his wealth, which has helped to improve our conditions many generations after the fact.



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Anita Tupper  
Christine Tupper



## Your weekly HOROSCOPE

### **ARIES** (Mar. 21- April 20)

You should be doing something special with children. Try to keep your cool; you may be a tad frazzled by all the rushing around. Lighten up your serious attitude. Property purchases should be on your mind. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

### **TAURUS** (Apr. 21- May 21)

Don't be alarmed. A better diet, exercise, or a change to a relaxed atmosphere could be ways to soothe your nerves. For now just do the best you can. Your energetic nature and ability to initiate projects will add to your popularity. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

### **GEMINI** (May 22-June 21)

You may find that your mate is well aware of the circumstances. Try to include friends and relatives in your activities. You will enjoy the interaction with youngsters and take great pride in the projects you've completed. You might have some problems balancing your books. Your lucky day this week will be Tuesday.

### **CANCER** (June 22-July 22)

You'll communicate easily and develop new friendships. False information is likely if you listen to idle chatter or gossip. In-laws or relatives may oppose your personal intentions. Don't let any small misunderstandings get in the way. Your lucky day this week will be Saturday.

### **LEO** (July 23-Aug 22)

Your need to put great detail into everything you do may cause you to miss the overall picture. Try not to jump to

conclusions. Offers of joint ventures are likely. You are exceptional at presenting your ideas. Your lucky day this week will be Friday.

### **VIRGO** (Aug. 23 -Sept. 23)

You can make money if you concentrate on producing services that will make domestic chores easier. A little volleyball or other outdoor sports should be on your agenda. You will tend to overeat this week. If you have to deal with large institutions, be careful not to make waves. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.

### **LIBRA** (Sept. 24 -Oct. 23)

Your hard work will payoff; advancement looks positive. You will want to complain about the injustice that is going on, You must take care not to over exert yourself if involved in sports. Try to iron out any friction over money with your mate or conflicts could prevail. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

### **SCORPIO** (Oct. 24 - Nov. 22)

Try to address the real issues in order to turn things around. Secret affairs will eventually backfire on you. Don't push your luck with authority. You will need to finalize important deals this week. Your lucky day this week will be Thursday.

### **SAGITTARIUS** (Nov. 23 -Dec. 21)

Deception is apparent. It's a great day to attend social functions. You will be on the rampage this week. You will be accident prone if you aren't careful this week. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

Teen



Page

## Beware Road Hogs

Well, you know I only talk when I get story fi tell. I was with my mother and little sister on the Northern Highway heading home to Ladyville when a black Nissan Altima overtook us on a curve and another car was coming in the opposite direction. The driver tried to squeeze between us and a car in front of us, which was like three feet away! He almost hit my mom's side and my little sister was in the back seat right near the door. I was so frightened because I didn't have on my seat belt (like I was supposed to) and I had my chair back.

### **CAPRICORN** (Dec 22.- Jan. 20)

Involvement in groups of interest will bring you in touch with important individuals. Take a break; you can finally mend any disputes on the home front. You are apt to meet someone special on your journey. Do not sign your life away. Your lucky day this week will be Wednesday.

### **AQUARIUS** (Jan. 21 -Feb. 19)

Your emotional state could leave you vulnerable and confused. The key to feeling good about yourself will be to do something about it. Limitations

We were so mad we decided to follow the fool to get the license plate. We kept driving and then all of a sudden he turned into Mirage Road, but then he turned off that street and started to speed up again. We kept following him, but he went down a little side street.

I wondered if he had noticed we were following because there was a shorter way to get there so maybe he was trying to shake us off. If he lived there, he would know the shortcuts.

We wanted his license, not just because he almost hit us, but because two weeks ago a little taxi was hit by our cutoff and when we went to buy barbeque the people asked us if we had seen a black car speeding through our road, since it just hit the taxi and left them there, not stopping. I think it might have been the same car because this person drives like an idiot. Maybe it's even a year round drunk driver.

Anyway, if you see a black Nissan Altima driving crazy around Ladyville or the Northern Highway watch out! He either causes accidents, or wants to cause accidents. So get his license plate just in case. There is a taxi driver looking for him and probably a few teens he almost killed who would like to tell him to SLOW DOWN. by J. Heusner

on the home front can be expected if you have been restricting your mate's freedom. Let go of the past in order to progress. Your lucky day this week will be Sunday.

### **PISCES** (Feb. 20-Mar. 20)

You won't get the reaction you want from your mate this week. Confusion could result when communicating with others. Tell them to get out of the mess they are in and then you'll consider getting together with them. Try not to get backed into corners. Your lucky day this week will be Monday.



THE

# hunt FOR GOOD FOOD with Anthony Hunt

## RIK'S HANGER CAFE

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Again, this is one of those places that you hear a lot about, at a location that is less than ideal. Having said that, Rick's does not disappoint. Not only is his atmosphere reminiscent of a true old Belizean restaurant with wooden booth style seating, but his food is good, presented nicely and the service, fast and very friendly. Rick himself served us, with a big smile and a gracious attitude that is a rarity in town these days. After deciding we weren't in the mood for "Hamadilly", we sampled the curry chicken and stew beef, both with stew beans and white rice. Both were good, although perhaps the beans needed a tad more salt. But let's not nitpick, the trip to the land of sea breeze and aviation fuel was worth it, and with the juice quenching the fiery hot pepper sauce, Rick's will definitely make it on to my list regular lunch stops. By the way, I see they carry a copy of the Independent on the counter...how can you go wrong!

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# Churches as contributors to the increase in Crime

**By: Kenneth Gale**

Kingston, Jamaica is the highest crime area in the Caribbean. Crime is so rampant in Kingston that on occasion citizens, out of sheer frustration, lynch criminals on the spot where they have been caught. Belize is progressively moving up to second place behind Kingston.

There are a number of reasons for the increase in crime in Belize. Among these is the inability of the less fortunate Belizeans to obtain an adequate education to properly maintain themselves during their lifetimes. A major obstacle is the **unnecessary, excessive costs of education**. The unnecessary and excessive cost is one that has been created by organized religions and perpetuated by the Church schools for many years. The Church schools have never moved to eliminate the unnecessary costs and appear to resist any attempt to eliminate the charges.

A person who through lack of education cannot maintain his or herself through legitimate employment will not sit by and starve. That person will seek other means of maintaining him or herself

Presently different schools use different titled books for the same subject. At times a school's requirement for a text book will not last longer than one semester. Whereas, in standardization there would be the identical subject matter education nationwide for all children. Books could last for 6 to 8 semesters. Their printing costs would be greatly reduced. Thousands of the less fortunate children, who would not otherwise be able to attend school, would then be able to attend.

Proper standardization could easily reduce the cost of books by 75%.

The problem is critical in the First through the Fourth forms where text-book costs literally deny the right of a proper education to thousands of Belizeans.

During a March 8, 2007 8:00 A.M. forum conducted on Positive Vibes Radio, Glenn Tillet emphasized the importance of standardizing school books and the great benefits that would be derived from standardizing the books. None of those he spoke to could come up with **any** reason whatsoever as to why school books **should not** be standardized.

It was brought out in the forum that the problems arising from failure to standardize books have existed for a great many years. There was only one reason given for the fact that the books had not been standardized: the parties which had met many times has been unable to agree upon which books were to be used.

This is sick. If the parties do not have the intelligence and ability to devise a means whereby the proper books are to be selected, then they should not be involved in the field of education!

Why does such an improper obstacle to education exist? Only the Churches that manage the schools can tell you. They should be made to explain their justification, if any exists.

Currently, there is great speculation among the public as to the reason books are not standardized. Public opinion runs from greed and corruption to supercilious attitudes on the part of the clergy. In any event, the clergy's failure to explain why they still cannot standardize text books is nothing sheer of contempt for all Belizeans.

Religions have a franchise in Belize in respect to conducting education, however, this franchise that has been abused.

There is one precept that exists in all recognized religions, that is, people are on earth to help each other, not harm each other. Any church that expounds

religion should live by their precepts. If they cannot, they should not be allowed to run schools.

They may think they are making money to help cover school costs, but in the long run they are costing the entire society by keeping people poor and forcing some of them into a life of crime.

*About the author: Kenneth Gale has provided costs of education for hundreds of needy children ranging from the University level through College and the First through Fourth Forms. He is the country's largest single purchaser of text books and*

*has had to pay the unnecessary and excessive cost of books during the past 10 years.*

*He spent 25 years as a Superior Court Judge in South Central Los Angeles, California, assigned there for the opening of that branch Court at a time when the area was the murder and PCP capital of the United States and the headquarters of the Bloods and Crips gangs. As Supervising Judge he placed into effect policies that diminished the power and greatly reduce the crimes of both the Bloods and the Crips.*

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# TOPICAL TIDBITS

## Huge Sugar Scandal



It is happening again as this is written - a new Crony deal! The PUP government has sold out the Libertad Sugar Factory along with 2,000 acres of the Santa Cruz land belonging to the factory for only \$1,000,000.

The original Libertad factory and land encompassed 6,000 plus acres. Then, in 2005, 4,000 of these acres were sold off cheaply to 'cronies' to grow 'super cane'. These cronies included a line up of Corozal and Orange walk PUP politicians and supporters plus one prominent UDP farmer and politician.

According to IMF figures the Santa Cruz lodge and land - without the factory - was valued at \$6,000,000 in 2005!

How did this come about? Well, go back to the Sugar Industry Act of 2001- and the PUP government's easing of the way for it cronies to take over 4,000 acres of the sugar lands owned by Libertad.

The Act became law after 2003 and said: "An Act to make new better provision for the administration and control of the sugar industry in Belize; to provide for the organizational structure of the sugar industry through the establishment of the Sugar Industry Control Board, the Sugar Cane Production Committee, the Sugar Industry Research "Laws of Belize, revised edition 2000, to repeal the Sugar (Special and Development Institute, the Sugar Cane Quality Control Authority and the Belize Sugar Cane Farmers Association; to provide for the establishment of the Sugar (Industry Development) Fund and the Sugar (Labour Welfare) Fund; to consolidate the laws regulating the control of the sugar industry; to repeal the Sugar Cane Industry (Control) Act, Chapter 283 of the Substantive Funds) Act, Chapter 219 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, revised edition 2000; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto."

And, in stepped the PUP friends and cronies and bought the 4,000 plus acres for little or no money on the pretext that they were 'modernizing' production when what in fact they were

doing was reducing the collective power of the traditional cane farmers.

## Diplomat found nearly naked



BBC reports that Israel is replacing its ambassador in El Salvador after the current envoy was found in a street, drunk, wearing only bondage gear, officials said.

"Our ambassador has been recalled immediately," a foreign ministry official told AFP news agency.

San Salvador was Tzuriel Refael's first post as ambassador, after promotion in 2006 from a foreign ministry position.

The official said that, although diplomats may have caused embarrassment in the past, this was "the last straw".



Nuhu Ribadu

## Millions stolen annually!

LAGOS, Nigeria (AFP): Five million dollars allegedly stolen by a Nigerian governor has been traced to the Bahamas according to the head of Nigeria's anti-corruption agency cited in reports published on Saturday.

Nuhu Ribadu, chairman of the Economic Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) was quoted as saying by local press here that the authorities in Bahamas had alerted the agency about the money.

"The case is in court that is why I will not mention the name. The rea-

son why I mentioned this is to show you what our elites are doing to our economy," Ribadu said.

Millions of dollars in state funds are believed to have been stolen from government treasury by officials in the past.



## Cancun beaches washed away - again!

From Julie Watson in Cancún, AP: A year after Mexico spent millions to replace beaches devastated by Hurricane Wilma, the resort of Cancún is fighting the forces of nature again. Erosion has shrunk its beaches to the point that waves at high tide lap against the verandas of some of the newly renovated hotels.

After Wilma, the Mexican government spent \$19m (£9.8m) to dredge the ocean floor and rebuild eight miles of beach with 2.7m cubic metres of sand. After the dredging was completed last spring, the beaches were nearly double their pre-hurricane size and tourists returned in droves.

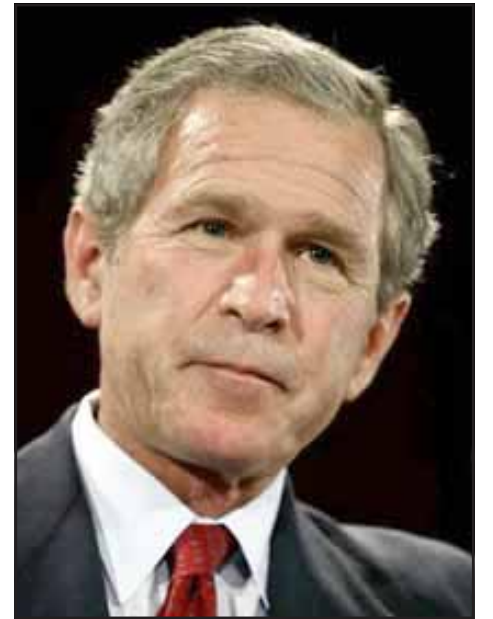
Just a year later, the beaches have shrunk again, to less than 20 metres (65ft) at mid-tide in the tourist zone, and swimmers are forced to clamber down metre-high ledges of sand to reach the water.

Tourism officials are planning a fund for future beach restorations, as well as an artificial reef off the coast that should help contain the sand. Meanwhile, sandbags line sections of the beaches and large, cloth-like tubes have been installed about 10 metres offshore.

But environmentalists say such costly efforts will be futile so long as hotels continue building at the water's edge and ripping out the vegetation whose roots once helped to hold the sand in place. They have been lobbying for a 10-metre strip of native plants, with paths between hotels and the beach.

## Bush reminder about Guat's right wing!

The Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA) urged President Bush to make justice and accountability for human rights abuses a priority during his visit to Guatemala -



particularly by emphasizing support for the legal cases against General Efraín Ríos Montt and members of his military high command.

"The case against Ríos Montt is not only about addressing some of the worst crimes committed in this hemisphere in the last century. It is also involves tackling the ongoing problem of impunity, and demonstrating that Ríos Montt's ties to organized crime do not put him above the law," said NISGUA National Organizer Andrew de Sousa.

Legal proceedings in both Guatemala and Spain are attempting to hold the former dictator and his military high command responsible for genocide and other gross human rights violations.

President Bush's visit to Guatemala this weekend came at a pivotal time in these cases, with Ríos Montt planning to launch a run for the Guatemalan Congress on May 2 in a bid to gain immunity from prosecution in the national court system.

## Maya's ward off evil spirits

Guatemala - A whiff of incense, a sputter of candles, a hum of prayer. Mayan Indian activists on Thursday offered the gentlest protest yet to the Latin American tour of President Bush as they held a purification ceremony to drive out the "bad spirits" they said he had left behind during a stop at their ancient pyramid.

Bush visited Iximche, capital of the prehispanic Kaqchiqueles kingdom, during his daylong trip to Guatemala as part of a five-nation tour of Latin America.

The activists said the bad spirits were roused by Bush's policies, including the U.S.-led war in Iraq. "Today is a special day on the Mayan calendar," said Jorge Morales, director of the Young Mayan Movement. "That's why we are taking advantage to do this special event to clean and get rid of the bad spirits and re-establish this sacred place's harmony."



# PNP & WTP form alliance

The Peoples' National Party (PNP) and the We The People (WTP) Reform Movement today formed a historic political alliance to contest the upcoming general elections candidates in every district.

Party leader, Wil Maheia of the PNP and Hipolito Bautista, coordinator of the WTP concluded the alliance this past week in San Ignacio Town with the signing of a memorandum of understanding and cooperation between the two political parties. Witnessing the historic event were representatives of the northern, southern and western caucus and other prospective candidates.

The joint platform is focused on reforms including constitutional ones and to ensure proper representation of all Belizeans regardless of party affiliation; legal amendments to stop the manipulation of elections by big businesses; to stop the loss of public assets to widespread corruption; and a productivity strategy to turn our country away from borrow and spend economics, uncontrolled crime, intolerable poverty for women, children and youth, worker exploitation, disappearing passports, and depressing education, health, and agricultural performance.

Our joint strategy and plan of action calls for:

- An elected Senate that represents the people and not the political party in power;
- A Whistle Blowers Protection Act that ensures immunity for those who report crimes
- A Campaign Financing Act that would limit on contributions from the wealthy few;
- Amendment to laws addressing voter distribution that will make everyone's vote count the same;
- Land distribution that is fair and empowers village councils while eliminating ministerial abuse;
- A national petroleum policy that doesn't put foreign profits above local benefits and protection of the environment;
- Investment in education to allow every child an equal opportunity for a good education and provides every school with the resources to prepare our youth for the future;
- Reforms to the Fisheries Act that will allow Belizeans to benefit first and foremost from a fishing industry that is managed in a sustainable way;
- Improvements to the national tourism policies so that communities and small businesses can benefit from the industry through more training and access to credit;
- An agriculture policy that diversifies production and investment away from monoculture to benefit small producers and doesn't allow a few monopolies to harvest all the profits;
- Business policy that create a level playing field and breaks up the monopolies that are benefiting at the expense of the consumer and provides oversight that is free of political interference to the DFC and SSB and full accountability for recent scandals;
- Support and respect for our labour laws and the unions;
- Strengthen the judiciary by removing it from the Office of the Prime Minister and

make sure the police have the training and equipment to do their jobs;

- A national health care system that reaches even the most remote rural communities and accounts for all monies spent;
- Respect for human rights, the constitution and the rule of law, with all Belizeans treated equally;
- Strengthening the Department of the En-

vironment so they can carry out the law without political interference and early passage of the national protected area system policy and plan;

- Policy changes in our foreign relations to allow for more collaboration with other nations
- Our Alliance will continue to seek joint election initiatives with other established parties

and individuals in an effort to field more candidates nationwide. We continue to seek the support of the trade unions, church organizations, businesses and non-governmental organizations and communities across the nation. Our Alliance will hold a press conference shortly to announce its slate of candidates and present its election platform and plan of action. *press release from PNP/WTP*

## THE ACTION TEAM for Ladyville



**Urbie Alamilla**

As a career educator and youth leader, I am well in tune with the issues affecting our youths and will utilize this experience and insight to formulate and implement practical programs to foster positive youth development



**Mike Ortiz**

A young contractor and draftsman and athlete, my focus has always been on organizing sports and other productive activity for the youths. As a village councilor for the past three years, I have intensified my efforts in this regard. I now offer myself to serve you once again



**Luciano Choc**

Having lived in Ladyville for practically all my life, I have always participated in and helped to organize community activities. Serving as village chairman over the past three years has given me an ideal opportunity to increase that involvement. It has been an honor and pleasure to serve my community at this level. Thanks for your support and participation, and I offer myself once again to be your village council chairman as we continue working in unity to improve our community.



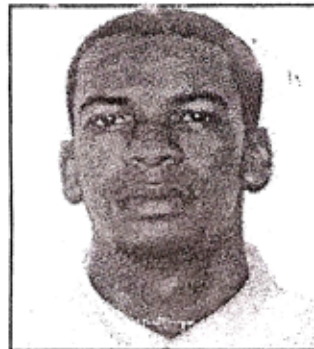
**Richard "Shaggy" Lopez**

I currently serve as a member of the Ladyville Village Council. I am offering myself once again to serve you for another term. My main focus has and will continue to be youth development.



**Carla Casimiro**

I am 38 years old and presently employed as a matron at Kolbe Foundation. As a village councilor, I will focus my energies specifically on women participation and development



**Paul Herrera**

I am a graduate of the University of Belize, and currently a lab-technician at Coca Cola Factory. Born, raised and employed in Ladyville, I have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the issues affecting my village, and have always done my part to help address those issues



**Joel Rowley**

At 20, I consider myself a productive youth. I am a college graduate presently employed at BATSUB, and community-wise I am involved in organizing our local darts-club. My focus as councilor will be on youth development

On  
April  
1st,  
2007

Vote  
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7

Let's work together and make  
our village a better place to live



# Hard Adventure

☛ (Continued From Page 4)  
 around the cabin locking the windows to prevent the seawater from pouring in. He skated around on the water on the floor as if he were born to surf. One window gave trouble so he flung himself outside the door and bolted along on the OUTSIDE of the boat to lock it. I was sure he was going to fall overboard. I looked up at one of the signs over the door: **Remain seated while the boat is moving.**

“Shouldn’t someone tie him on or something, or at least make him sit down?” I asked a colleague.

A few people were putting on the lifejackets they had been given when we left shore. Including me. As the boat slammed wave after wave it rattled and shook. I began to look for exits.

I don’t normally travel on enclosed boats and remembered why when a few people, deprived of fresh air, began to throw up. Hardly anyone was laughing now, except the people who were so used to it they were chatting away. Others were sleeping. Yes, sprawled out on the seats without the least concern for falling off onto the floor or flying off the stern. Is this what the BTB is calling “soft adventure?” Pretty hard on the backside. And nerves.

“Look, over there!” shouted one of the Audubon guys. I was afraid to look, sure he was pointing towards a giant Kracken that was rising from the deep to grab the boat in its tentacles and suck us down to the bottom, lost forever.

I thought of my husband and children. Take care of the girls Trev—

“Dolphins! two o’clock,” directed the guide. “How cute they are,” breathed a young blonde woman with some Euro-



*The lighthouse on Halfmoon Caye is an important landmark for mariners.*

pean accent I couldn’t quite catch. Her equally blonde friend was trying to steady herself long enough to take a photo.

Yeah, adorable, I thought, hugging my life vest closer. I had no intention of being distracted from imminent death by frolicking sea life.

“Whatsa matter Karla? You’re supposed to come from a long line of sea folk,” said one of the guides.

“I’m okay, just obeying port regulations here, how much further?”

“About ten minutes, we are at the atoll now.”

And indeed, we peered out and could see the land. Non-moving land. As we emerged from the confines of the boat onto the pier and used our noodley legs to make our way up onto the beach I suddenly knew why early adventurers named land they “discovered” after saints.

“I could kiss the ground,” moaned one of the passengers who had gotten sick. Someone stuffed a bottle of Dramamine

in her hand for the return trip. She perked up considerably.

We all did. How could you not? Half Moon Caye is one of the most beautiful places in Belize. Perhaps the world. Astonishingly lovely, even on an overcast day. We felt fortunate to be in this special place, free of hotels, just there to protect the wildlife and promote research.

The group assembled in the visitor’s center for a brief information session on the caye, the Blue Hole nearby and the atoll. We were surprised to learn that Belize’s Booby colony is one of only two in the whole Caribbean, the other in Trinidad and that researchers are investigating whether the communities are genetically related. In addition, the area provides important grounds for grouper and other fish and the caye has a littoral forest, not unlike that at Caye Caulker.

But despite its designation as a protected area, no less than eleven illegal fishing vessels were confiscated since the beginning of the year, mostly from Chunox and Sarteneja. The ranger who confronts them has to do so alone, unarmed, and then accompany a sailboat full of men some 6 to 8 hours back to Belize City where they can be charged.

The Coast Guard, we were told also assists, but it is largely up to PACT and Audubon to try and protect the protected areas. But these agencies are working with other fisherman to have them help manage fishing breeding ground and come up with alternative means of making a living, not just arresting people.

The lecture was informative but also interactive because we then took a walk across the caye, through the littoral for-

est. A young, enthusiastic Peace Corps volunteer told us about the plants and animals and of course the Audubon personnel were walking field guides full of interesting tidbits about each and every aspect of the caye and surrounding waters. We climbed the observation deck and saw hundreds of nesting booby birds and also frigates. At another spot, we were shown the area where the boobies are accosted by the frigates each evening as they return from fishing. They try to take away the Boobies’ fish after they lazed around all day and the boobies hunted. They fight ferociously; we even found both a dead booby and a frigate corpse on the beach.

At this same spot turtles nest in the summer months and their babies make the perilous trip back into the sea, braving these same aggressive birds. Only the fastest young ones make it.

After lunch we sped out to the Blue Hole, which, I have to say is not nearly as impressive from by boat as it is by air. We were told it’s actually a collapsed rock formation like a huge cave, not unlike the cenotes in other parts of the country.

As we approached we saw one of the illegal fishing vessels anchored right off the Blue Hole, nets out of sight, but the rangers from the caye knew they were just waiting until we were out of sight. They would be dealt with later that day.

I couldn’t help but wonder if this is happening in broad daylight in our supposedly “protected” areas, how much more illegal fishing is happening in areas outside the reserves which are not under constant surveillance.

The caye, with its rusty old lighthouse is familiar to many Belizeans, even more so after being on the cover of last year’s phone book, but sadly while many tourists visit each year, the Audubon society reports only a 100 or so Belizeans annually. This is primarily because it is an expensive and long trip out, and depending on the weather, it can be a rough one.

But if you can hold on long enough and keep your sense of humor, it’s a journey worth making if you have the opportunity. You will learn a lot, about the environment and also about what you can personally endure in order to appreciate it. You will also appreciate, all the more, the people who work as guardians of these areas so precious to Belize, and the world..



*See shells and coral on the shore of Half Moon Caye.*

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# Dead Man Walking

☞ (Continued From Page 1)  
bereft of any ability to pay, that as the I.M.F., as the I.F.I.'s were telling the creditors, you noh have no choice, you better take what you can get, otherwise you will get nothing.

## Then Barrow rallies his UDP troops

"All that Madam Speaker is the legacy of this P.U.P. government of this Prime Minister. He has lost all legitimacy, all semblance of support or sympathy and the only thing he can do now is go and go quickly. For the sake of our country, for the sake of your own party, where even your own ministers know and say privately that you are a dead man walking, just go!"

Known for his marathon speeches in past debates, Mesop Area Rep Michael Finnegan confined himself to only a few hours. He took square aim at Michael Ashcroft and the PUP's devotion to the man who would be king.

## Finnegan rips into his old buddy, The Lord & Master

"And I am the one who is still stand-

ing up and saying to you that the seven million dollar write off to the Carlisle Group is a slap in the Belizean people face. It is a disgrace, it is pathetic, it is a shame, and this government should be ashamed of yourself.

"When they were all sweet and hugging at each other Madam Speaker, nobody was criticizing Michael Ashcroft. Not the Prime Minister, not the PUP, not the Publisher - none of them were criticizing Michael Ashcroft. They were all eating this grand old potato pound that was full of spice and raisins. They were all eating at the potato pound, this government that created the Michael Ashcroft scenario. They are responsible.

How can we forget this great one of cheaper water bill, no won't forget, cheaper light bill, cheaper telephone bill, all in the manifesto of "Set Belize Free." They promised cheaper light bill, cheaper water bill, cheaper telephone bill. Madam Speaker it is nine long dreaded years and we are still waiting. Do you remember Madam Speaker that going into that 1998 elections on

Channel 7 News they had a little lady at the back of Lake Independence with an iron board and the lady was ironing.

He said the PUP will set up a commission for utilities and when you think your (Please Turn To Page 15) ☞

## Andy Palacio & the Garifuna Collective release *Watina*

☞ (Continued From Page 3)  
the pinnacle of Belizean music production to date.

*Watina* was released in the USA on February and has received huge international buzz in the music industry. The album is being released in over 100 countries thanks to a licensing and marketing agreement with Cumbancha, a label recently formed by Putumayo World Music's long time A&R vice-president, Jacob Edgar.

In only its first week *Watina* rose to #9 on the influential CMJ New World Chart which is based on radio airplay across the U.S.A. In January, the New York Times

highlighted the band's performance at Webster Hall in New York where they showcased as part of Globalfest 2007.

Andy Palacio & the Garifuna Collective will be touring extensively in 2007 in the USA, Canada, UK, Germany, Belgium, Spain and France.

*Watina* comes in a deluxe package with a 36 page full color booklet with artist photos and full song lyrics in English and Garifuna. The disc also includes a multimedia section containing videos and other features.

The album is available at all quality record stores and gift shops or online at [www.stonetreerecords.com](http://www.stonetreerecords.com)

## Tiny Tots take the Stage

This year the National Institute of Culture and History takes another stride in its mandated path of promoting and showcasing Belizean Art and artists of all genres and ages.

Included in the calendar of NICH'S events is another exciting showcase of young Belizean Talent. This time, the tiny tots will take the stage at The Bliss Centre for the Performing Arts. The week-long event will be termed the "BELIZE DISTRICT'S PRE-SCHOOLS' FESTIVAL OF ARTS" and is a collaborative effort of the Pre-School Unit, Ministry of Education and The Institute of Creative Arts, National Institute of Culture and History. For

this initial season this particular festival will be limited to the forty-eight (48) pre-schools in the Belize District and will be celebrated under the theme, "NURTURING YOUNG TALENT IS TIME WELL SPENT." Appropriately the event will run from 19 March 2007 to 23 March, 2007 - dates which fall within the month labeled, "CHILD STIMULATION MONTH."

The National Institute of Creative Arts and History firmly believes that the fate of the arts and culture lies with the hands of our young ones. We therefore extend a warm welcome to this addition to the NICH family.

May they explore, grow, and shine!

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# Social Page



Police Officer Randy Sanchez and Court prosecutor Jacqueline Willoughby are all smiles as they take vows to be joined in connubial bliss on Saturday, March 10.

## Dead Man Walking

(Continued From Page 14)  
 bill is too high, you will go to this commission, ha ha ha, and this commission will lower your bill. Ha ha ha, bwoy PUP could whap those people. I am telling you they are good.”

### What's the price for success, G7?

PUP Albert Representative Mark Espat, who helped steer the recent debt restructuring, maintained the outlook is positive despite public perception otherwise:

“No one Madam Speaker, no one can credibly argue that the health of government's finances has not improved significantly over the last two years, especially since 2004. The favorite threats, the favorite threats and forecasts of the Opposition of default and devaluation are no longer even relevant to the debate.

“The broad outline of the budget is once again very, very positive: keeping public finances on a sustainable footing and building on the progress of the past two years.

“With the economy expected, conservatively, to grow by 2%, but with petroleum corporate taxes being paid to the treasury for the first time this year, the overall budget deficit is expected at less than one percent of the gross domestic product or just \$24.7 million... Madam Speaker there is actually a recurrent budget surplus of \$65.6 million, the largest recurrent surplus in recent memory. Even after reclassifying \$25 million that was in capital II expenditure to recurrent expenditure.”

Deputy Prime Minister Johnny Briceno, the PUP Orange Walk Cen-

tral Area Representative believes the 2007-2008 Budget puts Belize back on track:

“I support this budget because it shows our emergence from the challenges of the past couple years to the promise of prosperity that every Belizean deserves. I support this budget because it puts us back on track, enabling us to continue to deliver on our manifesto commitments. I support this budget because it brings us closer to providing our young people with greater opportunities for education, build healthier communities, and because it continues to fight against the scourge of poverty. I support this budget because once again it recognizes in the Belizean people, the boldness to move ahead, to face the challenges of development, and to become stronger and more confident citizens.”

All in all a sober debate on many of the hot issues affecting Belizeans:

- 1) rampant official corruption
- 2) high costs of fuels, caused by Washington (Barrow says)
- 3) high consumption taxes
- 4) give-aways of national lands

What we would have liked to have seen is a performance assessment of the previous budgets because a budget is really only a guesstimate of expenditures & revenues for a future period. Therefore an evaluation of how effective the government executed the previous year's budget is what we really need to see on the one hand and, on the other, the efficiency of that past year's budget needs to be examined.

## Letters to the Editor

(Continued From Page 2)

every time there is a serious issue is a little too idealistic and may be going to extremes. Especially if the government's term is reduced to four years. Isn't an election result a referendum on governance? Wasn't the result of the Citco Election a clear and distinct message to the government that you have lost your mandate to govern?

To reduce the massive corruption taking place in the Ministry of Lands, the idea of a five-person committee to authorize the sale of national lands in excess of ten acres would be a big help. But again, I say the issue will always be personal integrity and honesty.

And while it is difficult to legislate morality, I put to your newspaper that it is in this realm of personal character where our biggest problems with good governance lies. There is a massive deterioration of integrity in the people who offer themselves as leaders in every field and career in this country. So while reform is essential and necessary, we still need honest and upright leaders.

Very importantly, the Ministry of the Environment should be upgraded. Land based tourism attracted responsible tourist because of bushes, ruins, reef and beaches. If we ruin these, we will be just another destination. This was our edge as opposed to the “glass and concrete” destinations. Judging from some the crazy projects being proposed, we are going to be in a deep mess.

The problem is deteriorating integrity and morals.

The above are my personal views and are not those of the UDP.

Respectfully, Henry Young

Former Area Rep and Minister of Government

### UDP are the same as the PUP

Dear Editor,

The March 11, 2007 issue of The Reporter published a letter to the Editor signed Henry Young. The letter criticized the newspaper, The Independent Reformer, for “dumping the UDP in the same dirty bag as the PUP”. He contended that it is not supported.

The trouble is that it IS supported. Even though the UDP doesn't have responsibility for the Development Finance Corporation (DFC) scandal. The difference between the two political parties is that the UDP has not been in the office long enough to become as deeply involved in corruption and become as bold as the PUP in what they have done.

Irrespective of that when the UDP was in office, like the PUP, low bidders were not selected and bribes were solicited. There were many Belizeans affected who were victims of such acts of corruption.

Mr. Young came out against an Elected Senate and proposed his own solution. In doing so he in effect acknowledges the fact that the present system of selecting Senators is not appropriate.

I maintain an Elected Senate is the best means of abolishing corruption. It would remove the dictatorial power of the Prime Minister and change the Country into a true democracy.

The UDP's present leader, Dean Barrow, has come out against an Elected Senate. Such a Senate would dash Barrow's hopes of slipping into the office as a dictator. Barrow rejected the adoption of an Elected Senate and in doing so made the statement that his party was entitled to its turn.

Barrow should come out and explain to the voters what he meant by the statement. The connotation that is frequently placed on the statement is shocking. It has been stated that what Barrow is stating is that the UDP wants the same chance as the PUP has had during the past 10 years. A chance to do what? The same opportunity for corruption?

Belize acquired a system where Senate is not elected as a reflection of England's political system where the House of Lords is not elected. England has now had enough. Due to existing scandal, on March 8, 2007 the House of Commons voted overwhelming to introduce election for the House of Lords.

Mr. Young opines that is it conceivable that all of the Senate seats could be won by a popular political party. That has never happened. A political party will gain seats when and only when the political party is properly conducting itself. When there are questionable acts of the party in power an interim election will change the control of the Senate to oppose the party.

The United States has had a recent election where the composition of the Senate has changed due to protest against the policies of the present party in power. The party out of office now has the majority of the Country's Elected Senators. **The Elected Senate has additional value in that the Senators answer to the voters not to a political party.**

Mr. Young makes a very valid point, he writes “The idea of reducing the Government's term from 5 years to 4 years would have my support”. In that respect Mr. Young is correct. The term of office of a corrupt Government would be shorter and the opportunity to soon change control through an interim election of the Senate would exist.

If Dean Barrow wishes to put an end to corruption he should immediately advocate and move for an Elected Senate and thereby also make Belize a true democracy.

Signed,

Fed up with red smoke and mirrors.



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