



# Editorial

## Stick To Acting Harrison Ford, You're Better At Indiana Jones than Chalillo

Did Harrison Ford, the popular Hollywood actor, actually write about the proposed Chalillo Hydroelectric Project and in so doing question the integrity of the Belizean government?

Don't think so. No way. Ford's by-line may have accompanied the article, but we doubt he actually penned the article, which appeared in the September 20th issue of *Globe & Mail*, a periodical based in Canada.

See, the article smacks of the patronizing attitude synonymous with the Natural Resource Defense Council. In our view, the local hardcore environmentalist front are networking with the NRDC in an attempt to attract financing for their continued existence (BACONGO survives on contributions and grants channeled through organizations like the NRDC and Dominion Energy, who we understand made significant donations to the Belize Zoo.) This seems the tail end of an attempt to create an "issue" and then enlisting support from wealthy environmentalist sympathizers like Harry, who are in a position to network and raise more funding for "the cause."

Take the local zoo. The zoo jefe recently hosted the Fortis Group and was more than friendly to the same people who the zoo claims are going to "sell the Macal Valley down the river." Word is that the Fortis camp was so pleased with the experience that they even decided to slip the zoo a check! Did NRDC and BACONGO know this? Oops. Maybe we should not have let the jag' out the bag.

In the past Daedra was happy role-playing as mouthpiece for the environmentalists because she thought it was all for a worthy cause. Someone must have pinched her. Because when she awakened to the reality that she was only being used to help create a "cause," she quit! Daedra turned on the phony eco-bunch and now works for the government - a government the environmentalists had made her slander! With Daedra gone, and no one on the local scene willing to take up the megaphone, the environmentalists have decided to go for a heavyweight - or at least create the impression the heavyweight is in its corner. Enter Harry.

Well Harry/Eco-ites, nothing has changed. Belizeans still support the dam. And we still maintain that we don't need strident foreigners, sorry, Harry or any other non-Belizean to tell us what to do in our backyard! But since Harry/Eco-ites/NRDC seem to think they have a right to as a global citizen, then a response is in order.

The article claims that the proposed dam at Chalillo would flood the Upper Macal River Valley and cause ecological devastation. Any dam will result in flooding. But certain measures must be taken to reduce the impact of these floods. Furthermore, Eco-ites/Harry failed to say that the dam would help with the management of the Macal River, which is prone to floods and known to cause substantial economic loss to residents and farmers along the river and downstream every year!

Harry/Eco-ites/NRDC also claim that the dam will lead to higher electricity rates for Belizeans since Fortis will want to cover its capital costs. Maybe the writer(s)

should have consulted Fortis. Fact is, the proposed dam would be operational at the end of 2003. That would have an approximate \$0.05 impact on earnings per share starting in 2004. According to a recent report by CIBC World Markets, if the dam is not built it would have a material impact on the outlook for Fortis.

That Fortis/BEL has ruled out alternative options is untrue. BEL has repeatedly said Chalillo is not the panacea to the demand for energy in Belize, which has been growing at 10% annually. BEL signed a memorandum of intent in 2000 to purchase energy from the Belize Sugar Industries, and is awaiting a firm price quote from the Independent Power Producers. BEL has also signed an agreement with the Energy Producers to buy up to 7MW of power. But you won't hear Harry/Sharon et. al mention this. No. Because this would discredit them and their "cause." Bottom line is that if the dam is not pursued, BEL/Fortis may have to resort to less environmentally friendly means such as diesel-fired generation, which BEL has been moving away from over the last 5 years.

The author(s) claim that Fortis couldn't build a dam like the Chalillo at home in Newfoundland. Truth is, Fortis has built several dams like the Chalillo in Canada and boasts an enviable track record. Just last year, Newfoundland Power, a wholly owned Fortis subsidiary, won the Environmental Award from the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Newfoundland (APEGN). Newfoundland Power won the award because of the environmental achievements in the development of the Rose Blanche Hydroelectric Plant. This project successfully reduced the greenhouse emissions by displacing 38,000 barrels of oil annually, and improved the water flow management of the Rose Blanche River.

We agree with most of the statements, "Belizean government officials, who have a financial stake in the dam's construction and have been pro-dam from the beginning, have 60 days to determine whether the project gets the green light." The government does have a financial stake - to ensure that BEL is able to meet the future energy demands of Belizeans at economical costs through developments such as the dam. The other alternatives will all drive cost up higher than the dam! Even the current opposition party knows this. They also advocated for the construction of the Chalillo during their last term in government and the leadership of the party still supports the dam! The only time you hear the Opposition and the government siding on any issue is when it is of national interest. This is obviously one of those issues.

That the writer(s) intentionally attempted to mislead is shown again by the deliberate mention of the jaguar as one of the species threatened with extinction. Come on! Belizeans KNOW that while the jaguars roam across the country, their greatest concentration is down south and there is a jaguar reserve in the Cockscomb Basin in the Stann Creek District. Who are they kidding?

Different pseudonym, same story.