

Letters to the Editor

Addressing Belize's electricity supply problems

Dear Editor,

It is generally agreed that the Macal River Upstream Storage Facility (MRUSF) will definitely cause new environmental damage to the Belize River. Aware that, regardless of political affiliation, we need to address Belize's electricity supply problems in an environmentally friendly manner, I suggest that the leader of the Opposition revisit his decision against hydroelectric potential development, and the following possible solutions.

Considering Belize's abundant hydroelectric power potential and the environmental damage the Macal River has already sustained, we should scrap MRUSF and install another run of the river facility downstream of Mollejon. This facility will not add any new

environmental problems to the Belize River, and not affect any critical habitats. Mollejon and the new downstream facility should be able to supply the Belize and Cayo districts.

In view of the expected reduced production due to the absence of MRUSF, the demand for the Stann Creek District and surrounding areas, and the Toledo district can be supplied from two new run of the river hydroelectric facilities on the Sittee River (possibly the Monkey river) and the Rio Grande. Mexico will continue to supply the northern districts until BSI's cogeneration project comes on line.

The suggestion of three new hydroelectric plants may suggest a three-fold increase in the possible

environmental problems. Because the demand is nearby and smaller there is no need to build big reservoirs that will flood massive acreages, thus having minimal impact on the environment and longer economic life.

Concurrent with these proposals, all newly constructed and unoccupied new homes should be mandatorily equipped with hybrid BEL/Solar systems. Customs and income tax incentives for retrofitting existing homes should be instituted. This will therefore reduce BEL's energy demand and lessen their expansion requirement.

Instead of just focusing on expansion BEL should be required by law to implement an aggressive conservation program where customers are given credit for annual savings.

Several smaller hydroelectric facilities have less environmental problems, longer lives, and remove the vulnerability of a single source. Burning environmentally unfriendly fossil fuels for the generation of electricity will only be required during emergencies. All sources are within Belize and therefore we are in complete control of the supply. The free renewable solar power component coupled with the conservation program will reduce BEL's energy demand and the amount of foreign exchange required to pay Fortis. This is a win/win solution.

Signed: Concerned person

Editor's note: The experts at BEL have after years of studies concluded that hydro power will never be able to supply the energy needs of Belize. Indeed the fact that BEL has now applied to the Public Utilities Commission for permission to construct a 25 MW natural gas generating facility is proof to this. Run of the river dams will continue to run into the exact problems that Mollejon presently experience, that of low or no production during the dry season, to build another of these is in the Editor's view throwing good money after bad money. Furthermore, new hydro-facilities only

UNITED DEMOCRATIC PARTY

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16th July, 2002

The Hon. Said Musa
Prime Minister of Belize
Prime Minister's Office
Belmopan

Dear Prime Minister,

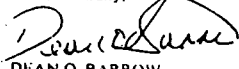
For some time now, the nation has been a shocked and frightened witness to an increase in murders of a kind whose violence and callousness seem unparalleled. The government appears bereft of ideas as to how to deal with the situation.

I write to suggest that the time has come for drastic action. Capital punishment for those convicted of murder remains on our statute books, but has proven a dead letter for decades. One way to remedy this situation is to remove the Privy Council as a final court of appeal in criminal matters. The society has been unbearably frustrated by the twists, turns and infinite capacity for delay that the Privy Council appeal process has entailed. The perception has grown that as long as it is in place, the legally mandated sentence of death for capital offences will never be carried out.

In view of all this, I strongly urge your government to prepare a constitutional amendment for public consideration, that would stop the criminal appeal process at our local court of appeal, making that the court of last resort. I am confident that such a move would command the support of the vast majority of citizens, and I naturally promise the full cooperation of the Opposition.

I hope that your government can act urgently in this matter and thus take one measure to satisfy a people badly in need of reassurance.

Yours faithfully,


DEAN O. BARROW
Leader of the Opposition

DOB:mig

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become economically feasible if they are at or near the national transmission grid. Any attempt at constructing any facility in the Stann Creek or Toledo districts must be viewed in light of that reality.

As far as solar energy goes, while it is an inexpensive source, the hardware is not so inexpensive, and technological advances have not moved as fast in regards to solar energy as one would have hoped for. Solar panels for example are still very large compared to the quantity of energy they are able to produce, and batteries are still the only place to store solar energy. Both panels and batteries are very expensive. The most blatant example of this is BTL who for years had a solar panel array to supply power to its repeater station at Biscayne on the northern highway, opted to go the route of BEL power as soon as electricity came to the village. BEL power is of course more reliable, and requires no maintenance.

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