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THE GUARDIAN

Letters cont'd

Sharon Matola responds to Meb Cutlack

Meb Cutlack's article in last week's Reporter raised interesting points concerning the proposed Chalillo dam. I would like to take this opportunity and address a portion of his fine piece. "If the new dam can be shown as a viable and cost-effective energy source for Belize, that does not too drastically devastate the environment, it should be proceeded with." Meb, you attended the presentation focusing upon the natural resources in this region last week in San Ignacio - do you not consider the destruction of 90% of that unique riparian ecosystem drastic? This is the very environment that defines the richest area of biodiversity found in this country. The greatest assets our country has, those which make us spectacular in the region, and will steadily prove to be an empowering factor in our nation's economy - are our natural resources. Shouldn't we be putting strong plans forward to conserve and manage these resources in the next millenium rather than developing plans to weaken this economic base? The World Bank no longer funds large dam projects due to their economic and environmental shortfalls. Should we ignore that? Should we turn our backs on the fact that 25% of the debt of foreign countries is due solely to dams?

Can we look at dams in our immediate region and examine their profiles? You will readily note that large dams in our neighboring countries are failures. What we are putting at risk is an area of Belize that stands alone in the richness of its biodiversity - there is financial value to these resources, which will only become more evident as time passes. And Meb, I join with others in commending you for drawing attention to developing the potential of biomass energy, especially with relation to Belize Sugar Industries and possible energy production from bagasse. I hold you in high regard, Meb, as a keen investigative reporter.

To the people of Belize, those who are asking questions about this issue, do them a service and look into the collaboration and "cooperative" discussions which are taking place between BEL and BSI about the bagasse issue. Let's hear about that, please. You may find out that such necessary communication is happening at these two levels: slim and none. Keep up the good work, Meb. I am hoping that you will continue to see that Belize is informed and updated about this important issue.

From: Sharon Matola

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