



Common Ancestry

ter all, we share a common ancestor - the expatriate!

Editor Sir,

Signed: H. A. Pierce

Belizeans Not

It is quite a surprise when expatriates are blamed for trying to stop development rather than for being too involved in it.

Historically, newcomers from a variety of countries have been at the forefront of development in Belize. In fact, last week we celebrated one group that was responsible for developing the southern coastal region into self-sufficient communities. Almost all the industries, from pirating and logging to aquaculture and tourism, have been pioneered by people who recently arrived from other countries.

Like any "development", some were beneficial for the nation, and some were not. As diverse as our culture is, it can be said that nearly every Belizean has expatriates in his family tree.

I believe that a closer look at the expatriates who are asking for the consideration of alternatives to the Chalillo Dam and the Mile 27 landfill site will show that they are not against development per se. In fact, many are actually promoting development in the form of the conservation industry. Because conservation is an essential element to eco-tourism and research tourism, and because it enjoys tax incentives in the developed world, it is one of the newest and fastest growing industries in our region.

Because of the conservation and tourism industries, the value of a tarpon or manatee has increased. They are now worth more alive than dead. It may soon be more profitable to leave high bush intact than it is to clear it for timber or agriculture.

Conservation helps maintain the environment to attract affluent retirees from other countries. This itself may become an industry in which every Belizean has a chance to participate. But, as in the case of Chalillo and Mile 27, the conservation goals are in conflict with projects and practices which will damage or have the potential to damage the environment. After all, tourists, researchers and retirees don't pay to visit or to live near dams and dumpsites.

However, the tourism-conservation industry is dependent on a steady supply of electricity, and at the same time it is a significant producer of waste. So it is in its best interest, in fact, it is within its sphere of responsibility, to assist in finding solutions to the waste disposal and electrical generation problems.

It is the responsibility of government and utility companies to give fair consideration to all seriously suggested solutions - no matter the source.

Mutual respect is the key. Af-