

## Editorial

*It's the most wonderful time of the year, the Christmas Carol proclaims.*

But why is this so?

Is it because of the music and the generosity of spirit which encourage people to buy presents and exchange gifts? If so, where does this spontaneity and good cheer come from?

It comes from an incident deep in history, two thousand years ago, when a child was born to a young Jewish girl named Mary.

The coming of this special child had been foretold throughout Jewish history, and when he was born angels announced His birth with the words: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men*

When he grew up and began to teach at age 30, this special child, now a man, began to do some amazing things. More mind-boggling, he made the claim that he is the Son of God sent by His Father, to forgive sins. He healed the sick. He cured the lame. He brought dead people back to life. He lived in utter poverty, but enriched the lives of millions.

His teachings about hope and love, about faith and forgiveness, fortitude and salvation were so transcendently profound and beautiful that he convinced many of his day that he came from God, and that he was himself God. Nothing this world has produced since comes even close to vision and insights that Jesus gave us.

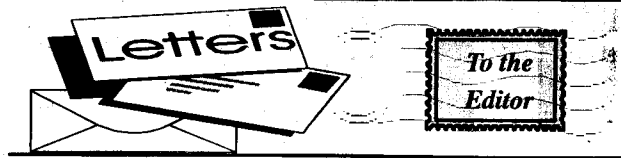
His claim put him on a collision course with the Jewish leaders of the time, who were also the political ruling class. They accused him of blasphemy. They eventually killed him by nailing him to a cross and leaving him to die through hours of agony.

But Jesus' message of love and hope won over many converts. Throughout the ages His message of peace and goodwill shines like a burnished beacon, beckoning mankind to a better life, to acts of nobility, and to hope beyond the grave.

There are still men and women of intellect who spurn His claim and live by their own standards, but there are millions and millions who accept Jesus and proclaim Him as their personal Saviour and Redeemer of the world.

It is the memory of Jesus' love and generosity which inspires men and women the world over at Christmas time, the anniversary of His birth.

And it is in deep appreciation of His sacrifices for us that we accept His teaching and renew our faith in Him this Christmas.



## Chalillo Queries

Editor Sir,

In an article published in the *Reporter*, we learned that Fortis Ltd. Canada has received \$250,000 from the Canadian Government to produce a project Justification Report on the Chalillo dam.

The project justification report is expected to summarize the 1999 feasibility study done by AGRA CA Power on the Chalillo dam and make it more comprehensible to financiers and investors of the project.

Firstly it would appear that Fortis has very little faith in the success of the project; so little in fact, that they must write a justification report to justify the feasibility study that has already been completed. To make matters worse, they are not even willing to pay for this report themselves even though they are on record as one of Canada's wealthiest corporations.

Secondly, it is ironic that the Canadian Government can give Fortis \$250,000 so that investors and financiers of this proposed project will have access to the complete 1999 feasibility study and even a justification report so that they can understand the report more clearly. Meanwhile, the Belizean people, the people who will be affected by this dam and who ultimately will be the ones paying for it, still are not being allowed to see the complete feasibility study, not to mention a justification report so that we can understand it better.

Our country has laws designed to protect the public from these sorts of one-sided developments. Our Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) laws make it clear that before a project can be carried out, the people who will be impacted must be educated about the project. The very least the developers should do is give us the complete documents so that we can educate ourselves.

To this date, the complete 1999 feasibility study and EIA are still being withheld from the public, and virtually no public education on the Chalillo dam has been conducted. The documents that have been made available to us are incomplete. A quick look at the table of contents in the 1999 feasibility study and the EIA show you what is supposed to be there. However, many of the most important sections are missing from both documents.

According to BEL's CEO Lynn Young, the missing sections contain sensitive information so therefore they are being withheld. Is it any surprise that the first three sections missing are the Economic Analysis, Construction Cost Estimates and the Financial Analysis, not to mention various other missing sections?

How can we make an accurate decision about this project if we do not have all the information available to us? It is time we stand up as a people and demand what is rightfully ours. The freedom to decide whether we want, or do not want, a project that will certainly affect our future and the future of our country is a right that we cannot let anyone take from us. We must stand up and demand that our laws are followed and we are allowed to have a voice in what is done with our resources and how our country is run.

In response to this the Coalition of Concerned Citizens has been formed. The Coalition of Concerned Citizens's aim is to educate the public. Our objective is to make our government force BEL and Fortis to release to the public all information concerning the Chalillo dam. Then the public can decide whether or not they want the Chalillo dam, instead of the choice being made by the Canadian Government, investors and financiers.

In order to make a difference and make sure that Belizeans have a strong voice in the way our coun-

try is managed, we invite you to join the Coalition of Concerned Citizens. Help us educate people to make a difference in the way our country is being run, because after all, Belize is still supposed to be a democracy where people rule and not big corporations. Let us make sure it is so.

Signed: Jonathan Lohr