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SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON THE SITUATION WITH  
REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF  
INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES  
AND PEOPLES

BELIZE

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

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BELIZE 1/

1. GENERAL

1. Belize (formerly known as British Honduras) is situated on the eastern or Caribbean coast of Central America, bounded on the north and north-west by Mexico, and on the west and south by Guatemala. Its land area is about 22,963 square kilometres, which includes a number of islets (cays) lying off the coast.

2. At the last census, taken in 1970, the total population of the Territory was 119,863, of whom 39,332 lived in Belize City. Belmopan, the capital, had approximately 3,000 inhabitants in 1972. The population in mid-1978 was estimated at 158,000, consisting mainly of Creoles, American Indians (Mayas) and Caribs.

2. CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

A. Constitution

3. An outline of the constitutional arrangements set out in the British Honduras Constitution Ordinance, 1963, as amended in 1973 and 1974, is contained in the report of the Special Committee to the General Assembly at its twenty-ninth session. 2/ Briefly, the Constitution of Belize provides for a Governor appointed by the Queen; a Cabinet composed of the Premier and other ministers; and a bicameral National Assembly consisting of a Senate and a House of Representatives. Of the eight members of the Senate, five are appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Premier; two on the advice of the Leader of the Opposition; and one after such consultations as the Governor considers appropriate. The House of Representatives has 18 members elected by universal adult suffrage for a period of five years.

4. The Governor retains responsibility for defence, external affairs, internal security (including the armed forces) and the public service. Under the Belize Letters Patent, 1964 to 1974, the Governor, acting in accordance with the advice of the Premier, may assign to the Premier or any Minister, responsibility for any business of the Government not otherwise delegated. The Governor may also, under conditions imposed by him, delegate to a Minister chosen after consultation with the Premier, responsibility for matters relating to external affairs. Delegation

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1/ The information contained in this paper has been derived from published reports and from information transmitted to the Secretary-General by the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations on 24 August 1979 for the year ending 31 December 1978.

2/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 23 (A/9623/Rev.1), vol. VI, chap. XXVII, annex, paras. 3-4 and 10-14.

of this authority is subject to the approval of the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs.

5. It was announced in February 1980 that Mr. James Henessy would assume the post of Governor of Belize on 7 March 1980 following the end of the tour of duty of Mr. Peter McEntee.

#### B. Constitutional developments

6. The Constitution of the Territory was further amended by the Belize Letters Patent dated 3 December 1979, in which the post of Deputy Governor was established for the first time. Under the new amendment, the post of Deputy Governor is not a substantive post and comes into effect only for a period decreed by the Governor. When appointed, the Deputy Governor can have any or all of the powers of the Governor, with the exception of the authority to appoint another Deputy Governor.

7. According to press reports, the need for the post became apparent during 1979 when the Governor was out of the Territory. Under normal circumstances, the Financial Secretary would have become Acting Governor, but because there was no Financial Secretary at the time (Mr. Edmund Marshalleck was serving as Acting Financial Secretary), certain constitutional difficulties arose. Mr. Marshalleck was subsequently appointed Deputy Governor and was then able to serve as Acting Governor as the need arose.

#### C. Political parties and elections

8. There are two major political parties operating in the Territory, the ruling People's United Party (PUP) and the opposition coalition, the United Democratic Party (UDP). In the general elections held on 30 October 1974, PUP won 12 seats, its lowest total in 20 years, and the remaining six seats went to UDP. A member of UDP later joined PUP, bringing the number of seats held by PUP to 13.

9. In September 1979, the Office of the Premier announced that in accordance with the Constitution of Belize, the Premier had advised the Governor on the dissolution of the National Assembly and had set 21 November 1979 as the date of the next general elections.

10. The PUP platform was based on the stability of the Government, the personal integrity of the party's leader, Premier George Price, and the record of the present administration. PUP also promised social justice and equal opportunities for the Territory's ethnic groups and sustained development through increased government involvement in economic affairs. UDP, on the other hand, charged that the Government was Communist-oriented and based its campaign on promises of lower taxes and a higher level of employment. To that end, it proposed to establish an "open-door" policy which would attract North American investors.

11. The positions of the parties regarding the Territory's future status are outlined in the following section (see paras. 19-20).

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12. According to the results of the November elections, PUP won 13 seats in the House of Representatives; the other five went to UDP. Mr. Carl L. Rogers, then Deputy Premier and Minister of Home Affairs, and Mr. Dean Lindo, then Leader of the Opposition, lost their seats in the elections. Dr. Theodore Aranda and Mr. Philip Goldson were subsequently appointed Leader and Deputy Leader of the Opposition, respectively. Mr. Rogers was appointed as a Senator and became Leader of Government Business in the Senate; he also retained his portfolio as Minister of Home Affairs (see para. 14 below).

13. At the time of the recent elections, there were 49,606 registered voters in the Territory, of whom 44,977, or 90.7 per cent, voted (34,454 and 23,808, respectively, in 1974). PUP polled 23,309 votes (51.8 per cent) while UDP received 21,045 (46.8 per cent). The remaining ballots were spoiled (527) or were cast in favour of a minority party (96) whose candidates lost their deposits. Persons between the ages of 18 and 21 years were allowed to vote for the first time.

14. The present Cabinet consists of the Premier, Mr. George Price, who retained his position as Minister of Finance, and other ministers with the following portfolios: Mr. Louis Sylvester, Energy and Communications; Mr. David McKoy, Labour and Social Services; Mr. Florencio Marin, Works; Mr. Elijio Briceño, Local Government and Social Security; Mr. Guadeloupe Pech, Commerce and Industry; Mr. Said Musa, Attorney-General and Minister of Sports; Mr. Assad Shoman, Health, Housing and Co-operatives; Mr. V. H. Courtney, Minister of State; and Mr. Carl L. Rogers, Minister of Home Affairs.

15. Senators appointed by the Governor on the advice of the Premier, in addition to Mr. Rogers (see para. 12 above), were Mr. Gasby Ramos, Mr. Juan Chun, Mr. Herman Lewis and Mrs. Norma Fuller. Messrs. Manuel Esquinel and Elodio Aragon were appointed on the recommendation of the Leader of the Opposition, while Mrs. Elvira Searle was appointed at the Governor's discretion.

#### D. Future status of the Territory

16. Information on this subject prior to and including April 1979 is contained in the report of the Special Committee to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session. 3/ Subsequent developments are outlined below.

##### (1) Positions of the local political parties

17. As previously reported, 4/ in February 1978 UDP issued a "Declaration on Deferred Independence" in which it called for a moratorium on independence for at least 10 years, during which time economic and social development would be pursued,

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3/ Ibid., Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 23 (A/34/23/Rev.1), vol. IV, chap. XXIX, annex, paras. 8-37.

4/ Ibid., para. 10.

the National Army would be strengthened and the territorial Government, in concert with the United Kingdom, would seek the military co-operation of friendly nations for the defence of Belize.

18. In June 1978, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the Premier of Belize, the Leader of the Opposition and the United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs. The parties to the Memorandum agreed, among other things: (a) that the issue of the dispute between the United Kingdom and Guatemala over the Territory should be put above party politics and the search for a solution treated as a national objective; (b) that both the Government and Opposition of Belize would be represented at any future talks between the United Kingdom and Guatemalan Governments concerning the dispute; (c) that any final agreement would be put to the people of Belize in a referendum; and (d) that a solution to the dispute was highly desirable for progress to be made towards the independence of Belize. In keeping with the spirit of the Memorandum, both the Deputy Premier of Belize and the Leader of the Opposition were present at the subsequent debate in the General Assembly on the question of Belize.

19. In an article which appeared in the Financial Times (London) on 21 November 1979, Mr. Dean Lindo, then Leader of UDP, reiterated his party's policy of deferred independence. He claimed that independence was "not a panacea for the problems of the Territory" and identified inflation, unemployment, and poor administration among the more urgent problems facing Belize. Regarding the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute, he stated that if UDP were successful in the forthcoming elections, it would try to break the stalemate by requesting the Government of the United States of America to use its influence and persuade Guatemala to drop or change its demands. UDP would also urge the United Kingdom to maintain a training camp, as opposed to a full military force, in Belize after the Territory achieved its independence. Mr. Lindo believed that such an arrangement would not interfere with Belize's sovereignty and would act as a deterrent to Guatemala's territorial claims.

20. The standing policy of PUP concerning the future status of the Territory was reaffirmed by Premier Price in an address on the state of the nation delivered on 4 September 1979. The Premier stated, inter alia, that the objective of PUP was to obtain independence by peaceful means, under conditions that would leave Belize secure, free from threats of aggression and of war and with all its territory intact. That policy was supported by similar statements made by members of the ruling party within the Territory and at various international fora, including the United Nations General Assembly, the Sixth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries held at Havana from 3 to 9 September 1979 and the Meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government held at Lusaka from 1 to 7 August 1979. In an article published in the Belize Times on 29 August 1979, the Premier disclaimed any knowledge of an Anglo-Guatemalan agreement under which Belize would become independent in 1980 with land cession. He added that his Government's policy was based on the relevant resolutions of the United Nations, which supported the safe and secure independence of Belize with all its territory. In a speech delivered on 27 November 1979 at the opening of the Fourth National Assembly of Belize, the Governor stated that "the process of decolonization will be

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accelerated and all vestiges of colonialism removed. The Government is resolved to achieve independence for Belize with all its territory as soon as it is possible".

(2) Consideration by the General Assembly

United Kingdom

21. In a statement before the Fourth Committee on 30 October 1979, 5/ the Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom referred to a set of proposals his Government had put to the Government of Guatemala in September 1978 with the consent of the Government of Belize. He stated that if those proposals had been accepted, Belize could have proceeded to the early and secure independence which it had sought for 15 years and which the United Kingdom had consistently supported. Unfortunately, Guatemala had rejected the proposals. The commitment of the United Kingdom to bring Belize to independence remained as strong as ever, but, regrettably, no progress had been made towards a settlement since the rejection of the proposals.

22. According to the Permanent Representative, negotiations between the United Kingdom and Guatemala had not been resumed because of the general election in May 1979 in the United Kingdom and the forthcoming general elections in Belize. However, contact had been maintained and recently Mr. Nicholas Ridley, Minister of State at the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, had had a courtesy meeting in New York with Mr. Rafael E. Castillo-Valdez, the Minister for External Relations of Guatemala. The United Kingdom, for its part, hoped that negotiations with Guatemala could resume in 1980 and it had reason to believe that Guatemala was also keen to resume the negotiations and was prepared to make changes in its current approach. The United Kingdom was also ready to consider any constructive proposals which Guatemala might put forward provided that any solution proposed was acceptable to the Government and people of Belize.

23. On 25 September, Lord Carrington, United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, in a statement before the United Nations General Assembly, 6/ stated that it remained the policy of his Government to respect the wishes of the peoples of the few remaining Territories under United Kingdom administration and that it was for those Territories to determine their own future in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. He stated that his Government would therefore continue to give every support and encouragement to any of them who sought independence. When there were difficulties, his Government would do its best to overcome them. In particular, the United Kingdom wanted to bring Belize to secure independence as soon as possible.

24. On 4 October, in the exercise of the right of reply, a representative of the United Kingdom stated 7/ that the policy of his Government towards Belize was

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5/ Ibid., Fourth Committee, 19th meeting, paras. 2-4.

6/ Ibid., Plenary Meetings, 8th meeting.

7/ Ibid., 21st meeting.

governed by its unalterable principle of respecting the wishes of the inhabitants and that it wanted to grant Belize the speedy and secure independence which its people and Government wished. He stated further that it was not his Government's denial of self-determination that obstructed that independence, but the policies of Guatemala. He stressed that his Government had never accepted, and did not then accept, that Guatemala had a valid claim to any of the territory of Belize.

#### Belize

25. In a statement before the Fourth Committee on 30 October, <sup>8/</sup> Mr. Carl L. Rogers, then Deputy Premier of Belize, stated that the adoption of General Assembly resolution 33/36 of 13 December 1978 had been welcomed by the people of Belize as a landmark in its struggle to gain world-wide recognition of its inalienable right to determine its own destiny and preserve its territorial integrity. That resolution had clearly and categorically urged the United Kingdom and Guatemala to pursue vigorously their negotiations with a view to settling their differences over Belize, and to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session on the outcome of the negotiations.

26. The Deputy Premier stated that it appeared that that mandate had not been carried out by the parties concerned, for the Government of Belize had not been invited to, nor had it participated in, any negotiations or conversations between the United Kingdom and Guatemala, nor was it party to any agreement with those Governments relating to a settlement of the dispute.

27. The Deputy Premier declared that his Government's objective was to attain secure independence for Belize with all its territory intact and added that it was prepared to move to independence either as a result of a settlement of the dispute between the United Kingdom and Guatemala, provided that such a settlement recognized the territorial integrity of Belize, or under a security arrangement with all its territory preserved. He added that, although the first alternative was preferable and would seem the likely course, the possibility of a peaceful security arrangement could not be dismissed.

28. According to the Deputy Premier, during the past year, the Government of Guatemala and its agents had been actively engaged in undermining the democratic process in Belize by interfering in the electoral campaigns to secure the election of candidates opposed to the present Government and more amenable to manipulations from Guatemala. They continued to conduct other subversive activities within Belizean territory and engaged in daily propaganda offensives through the use of powerful radio stations. He cautioned that those activities were not creating a climate conducive to the maintenance of peace and stability in the region and that the attempt to intimidate the people of Belize only served to strengthen their resolve to continue the struggle for their national rights.

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<sup>8/</sup> Ibid., Fourth Committee, 19th meeting, paras. 6-22.

29. The Deputy Premier stated that Belize felt particularly bolstered by the support and understanding it had received from the United Nations, from the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Commonwealth of Nations, from members of the non-aligned movement, and particularly from its Latin American neighbours.

30. In that connexion, Belize welcomed the final declaration of the Sixth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries, which reiterated the movement's unconditional support for the Belizean people's inalienable right to self-determination, independence and territorial integrity; condemned all pressure or threats to prevent the full exercise of that right; and supported the right of the Belizean Government and people to make the agreements they considered necessary to enable them effectively to counteract that threat. After demanding full implementation of the resolutions on the subject adopted by the General Assembly, the Conference had also exhorted all States, and especially the members of the movement of non-aligned countries, to support Belize's speedy progress towards immediate and secure independence, with strict respect for its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

31. In conclusion, the Deputy Premier expressed the hope that, with the co-operation of all Member States, the twentieth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples would see the end of colonialism in the Americas.

#### Guatemala

32. In a statement before the General Assembly on 3 October, 9/ Mr. Rafael E. Castillo-Valdez, Minister for External Relations of Guatemala, declared that the historical background to his Government's claim to Belize had been stated in previous sessions of the General Assembly and that it was clear that the occupation by the United Kingdom of Belize constituted a serious obstacle to the economic and social development of the peoples of Guatemala and Belize and to the progress of the Central American region. He reiterated his Government's willingness to negotiate with the Government of the United Kingdom a just solution to the century-old controversy concerning Belize, a solution that would reconcile the legitimate rights of Guatemala with the vital interests of the people of Belize.

33. The Permanent Representative of Guatemala, in a statement to the Fourth Committee on 1 November, 10/ made the following points:

(a) An international legal dispute over Belize was currently the subject of negotiations between the United Kingdom and Guatemala. No decision on self-determination and independence for Belize could be taken until that dispute had been settled. Guatemala was ready to bring those talks to fruition and was gratified that the United Kingdom Government was similarly inclined.

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9/ Ibid., Plenary Meetings, 19th meeting.

10/ Ibid., Fourth Committee, 22nd meeting, paras. 68-81.



(b) The legal nature of the dispute should be reflected in any negotiated settlement of the question of Belize. The Guatemalan people would then be able to ratify any such settlement, in accordance with their Constitution, under which Belize was part of Guatemala and any measures affecting that Territory had to conform with the national interest. Those attitudes were behind his Government's quest for a just settlement which would preserve Guatemala's interests while safeguarding the interests of the Belizean people.

(c) A new series of negotiations which had begun more than two years previously had, at times, reached a stalemate, as had occurred a few months earlier. However, that stalemate would be broken as soon as the situation improved, when the new Belizean Government was formed following the elections to be held in Belize at the end of November.

(d) The position stated by the Deputy Premier of Belize (see paras. 25-31 above) was regarded as inflexible and inappropriate and in no way conducive to reaching a negotiated, peaceful settlement of the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute. It contravened the 1978 Memorandum of Understanding (see para. 18 above) between the Government of the United Kingdom, the Premier of Belize and the Leader of the Opposition, by which it had been decided to put the issue of the Anglo-Guatemalan dispute above party politics and to treat the search for a solution as a national objective. In the absence of a settlement of the territorial dispute, the status of Belize could not be validly altered. The Deputy Premier's accusation that Guatemala was interfering in the affairs of Belize, and particularly in the electoral campaigns, was derived from his fear of seeing his party lose in the elections.

(e) With respect to the statement made by the representative of the United Kingdom (see paras. 21-22 above), Guatemala was prepared to consider constructive proposals intended to bring about solutions which were just and equitable for all parties, including the people of Belize.

### (3) Decision of the General Assembly

34. On 21 November 1979, on the recommendation of the Fourth Committee, the General Assembly adopted resolution 34/38 on the question of Belize. Guatemala did not participate in the vote on the resolution recommended by the Committee, which it specifically rejected. The operative paragraphs of the resolution read as follows:

"The General Assembly,

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"1. Reaffirms the inalienable right of the people of Belize to self-determination, independence and the preservation of the inviolability and territorial integrity of Belize;

"2. Urges the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, acting in close consultation with the Government of Belize,

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and the Government of Guatemala to continue their efforts to conclude their negotiations without prejudice to the right of the people of Belize to self-determination, independence and territorial integrity and in furtherance of the peace and stability of the region and, in this connexion, to consult as appropriate with other specially interested States in the region;

"3. Requests the Governments concerned to report to the General Assembly at its thirty-fifth session on any arrangements which have been made to enable the people of Belize to exercise freely and without fear their right to self-determination and an early and secure independence;

"4. Calls upon the parties concerned to refrain from exerting any pressure or the use of threats or force against the Government and people of Belize to prevent the full exercise of their inalienable right to self-determination, independence and territorial integrity;

"5. Urges all States to respect the right of the people of Belize to self-determination, independence and territorial integrity, and to render all practical assistance necessary for the secure and early exercise of that right;

"6. Requests the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples to remain seized of the question and to assist the people of Belize in the early exercise of their inalienable rights."

(4) Consideration by other bodies

35. It will be recalled 11/ that, at the Meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government held at London in June 1977, a ministerial committee was established to assist the parties concerned in finding early and effective arrangements for the independence of Belize. The Committee has met at various times since its establishment.

36. The question of Belize was again considered at the Meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government held at Lusaka from 1 to 7 August 1979. The final communiqué issued after the meeting stated that:

"Heads of Government reviewed developments over Belize and noted with appreciation the work of the Commonwealth Ministerial Committee on Belize. They reaffirmed their full support for the legitimate aspirations of the people of Belize for early and secure independence on the basis of territorial integrity, and again acknowledged that any settlement of the question must command the full consent of the Government and people of Belize. Heads of Government renewed their commitment to the search for an acceptable solution and in this regard requested the Committee, consonant with its mandate,

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11/ Ibid., Thirty-second Session, Supplement No. 23 (A/32/23/Rev.1), vol. IV, chap. XXIX, annex, para. 29.

to intensify its efforts to mobilize even further international support for Belize. Noting that there were ongoing talks with Guatemala and bearing in mind the special responsibilities of Britain as the administering Power, they welcomed the British Government's readiness to resume negotiations with a view to producing an internationally acceptable settlement in accordance with the Charter and relevant resolutions of the United Nations."

37. As mentioned by the Deputy Premier of Belize in his statement before the Fourth Committee (see para. 30 above), the question of Belize was also considered by the Sixth Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries held at Havana, from 3 to 9 September 1979. In conformity with a decision taken at that conference, Belize was granted special status, including the right to address the conference. The report of the conference is contained in document A/34/457.

(5) Recent talks on future status

38. According to press reports, Mr. Nicholas Ridley, Minister of State at the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and the Guatemalan Foreign Minister, Mr. Castillo-Valdez, accompanied by officials and advisers and by two representatives of the Belizean Government, met in Bermuda on 19-20 May 1980 for a new round of negotiations concerning the future of Belize.

39. In a press release issued by the United Kingdom Government it was stated that the Ministers had examined at length all aspects of the question in a frank and friendly spirit and made positive progress on those points to which the parties concerned attached particular importance. The meeting had taken place in a notably co-operative atmosphere. The Ministers had expressed the firm determination of the Guatemalan and United Kingdom Governments to pursue their efforts to find a solution which fully satisfied the interests of the Guatemalan, British and especially the Belizean peoples. It had been agreed to hold further talks in the near future.

E. Public service

40. According to the report of the administering Power, in 1978 there was a total of 2,751 persons in the established grades of the Belize Civil Service, including 61 expatriates. Of the expatriates, 43 were on contract assignments and 17 were technical advisers. In his message of 4 September 1979 on the state of the nation, the Premier stated that during the past five years there had been three revisions of salaries and wages for government employees: a 10 to 20 per cent increase in 1975, a 15 per cent increase in 1976 and an increase of 20 to 25 per cent for the 1978/79 budget year. Over the five-year period, senior officers had received a total increase of 45 per cent and junior officers, manual workers and pensioners, 50 to 60 per cent.

F. Other developments

41. In his speech on 27 November 1979 at the opening of the Fourth National Assembly of Belize, the Governor announced the following plans:

(a) The Government would continue to seek a safe and secure independence for Belize with all its territory;

(b) A code of ethics governing the conduct of members of the National Assembly would be introduced early in the session;

(c) A Citizen's Complaints Board to monitor the conduct of law enforcement personnel would be established;

(d) The office of ombudsman would be created and institutions of public service reorganized for greater efficiency and maximum service to the people.

The Governor also outlined policies and programmes intended to promote the economic, social and educational development of the Territory, some of which are reviewed in the remaining sections of this paper.

3. ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

A. General

42. The Territory's economy is based primarily on agricultural exports (sugar being the most important product), construction and manufacturing, and government expenditures; the Government, in turn, depends heavily on external sources for its capital development resources. The territorial Government continues to encourage exploitation of such local natural resources as fisheries, forests and petroleum. The tourist industry is also being developed.

43. According to press reports, an economic mission of the World Bank visited the Territory from 29 October to 10 November 1978 and again in December 1979. It was

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stated in the resulting report that the Territory's economy had shown a strong performance throughout the 1970s. The real gross domestic product (estimated at \$US 760 per capita in 1977) had increased an average of 5 per cent a year, and the public finances had remained sound throughout the period, reflecting the buoyancy of the economy and effective budgetary control.

#### Government economic policy

44. In his speech of 27 November, the Governor stated that the Government would promote economic development and social progress in the framework of the mixed economy, in which the public sector worked in partnership with the private sector for increased production, balanced development and social well-being. The Government would continue to provide a healthy and stable climate for industrial development and would encourage the establishment of processing industries for the Territory's agricultural products. It would pursue a flexible policy of price controls and establish a bureau of standards to ensure quality control. Those investments, both local and foreign, which served the best interests of the Belizean people, would be encouraged and assisted.

45. The Governor further stated that the process of recovering and redistributing land to Belizeans for agricultural use would be intensified, and a comprehensive land reform programme would be continued. Marketing, credit and related services for Belizean farmers would be reorganized and enhanced. Finally, the Government would continue to encourage the orderly and systematic growth of the tourist industry.

#### B. Agriculture, livestock and fisheries

46. Agriculture is the most important sector of the economy. Although less than 10 per cent of arable land was under cultivation in 1977, agricultural production and related processing industries contributed 29 per cent of the gross domestic product, employed 40 per cent of the labour force and provided 74 per cent of domestic exports. Despite the relative importance and potential of agriculture, Belize is far from self-sufficient in food. The Territory's imports of food items accounted for over 20 per cent of the total import bill in 1977. Land distribution is highly skewed; the Government owns over 60 per cent of the land and two individuals hold 40 per cent of the remainder. Much of the most accessible land is held by absentee landlords. The Government is intensifying its efforts to implement a comprehensive land reform programme.

47. During the period under review, the agricultural sector made modest over-all gains despite the damages caused by Hurricane Greta in 1978. A decline in sugar and citrus fruit output was counterbalanced by increases in other areas, namely bananas, grain crops and livestock.

48. As a result of machinery breakdowns, pests and smut disease, sugar production declined from 114,000 metric tons in 1978 to 99,000 metric tons in 1979. At the end of July 1979, 63,162 metric tons of sugar and 18,542 metric tons of molasses had

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been exported. Sugar exports in 1978 were valued at \$BZE 60.7 million. <sup>12/</sup> A survey to determine the acreage in danger of smut disease and to advise farmers on smut-resistant varieties of sugar cane has been completed.

49. Banana production in 1979 rose to 1.0 million boxes (300,000 boxes over the previous year's output). Funds were made available by the United Kingdom Government to rehabilitate and improve the industry following the ravages of the hurricane. More recently, loans to the industry totalling \$BZE 11.8 million have been approved by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) and the Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) for expansion programmes, including irrigation.

50. The output of citrus fruits declined from 987,000 boxes in 1978 to 755,000 boxes in 1979. Rehabilitation funds have been provided to growers, who at the same time have benefited from higher prices for citrus fruits. The additional funds have helped in the improvement and expansion of orchards, and the next crop is expected to show a markedly increased output.

51. The two major grain crops, rice and corn, registered slight decreases in 1979 as a result of hurricane damages. The current crop, which began in the early part of 1980, indicated substantial increases in production, particularly from small farmers. Recent flooding in the Belize River Valley will reduce the production of red kidney and other types of beans.

52. A census of the livestock population in the Territory was taken in 1978. There were 48,747 head of cattle on 1,386 farms, which occupied 97,650 hectares. During the year over 500 metric tons of beef were exported to the United States and Martinique. The pig population was estimated at 20,000. A total of 1,500 tons of poultry meat was produced locally for the domestic market. The production of livestock in 1980 and subsequent years was expected to improve as new livestock enterprises became established and improved breeds of cattle and pigs were more widely distributed.

53. The fisheries industry continued to expand during the period under review, and more emphasis was placed on scale and deep-sea fishing. A general survey of the lagoons and rivers was in progress to determine the potential for introducing commercial fishing. A survey was also under way to assess the juvenile conch population and to define areas of abundance. A project has been initiated to assess the status of the shrimp industry and the best way to manage it. During 1978 the following fisheries exports were reported:

<u>Commodity</u>	<u>Weight (kgs.)</u>	<u>Value (\$BZE)</u>
Lobster	172,000	3,800,000
Conch	209,000	922,000
Shrimp	29,000	259,000
Scalefish (fresh; drey-salted and fillet)	192,000	492,000

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<sup>12/</sup> The monetary unit is the Belizean dollar (\$BZE). Since May 1976 the rate of exchange has been fixed at \$BZE 1.00 to \$US 0.50.

### C. Construction

54. An upswing in construction activity was registered in 1978 and continued into early 1980, particularly in residential construction in Belmopan, Belize City and the Ladyville area. The Government continued to provide low-cost housing in Belize City and the Territory's financial institutions have been providing more housing loans. Expansion in hotel construction and some manufacturing enterprises gave additional impetus to the construction sector. At the end of the third quarter of 1979, commercial banks had loans outstanding to the sector of over \$BZE 8.2 million and the government-owned Development Finance Corporation (DFC) had made 42 housing loans valued at \$BZE 848,000.

55. Basic building materials, lumber and cement were relatively scarce during 1978. According to press reports, in early 1980 there was a substantial increase in supplies of locally produced materials such as nails, roofing and timber and of imported materials, mainly cement and steel.

### D. Manufacturing

56. The manufacturing sector in Belize is the largest among the least-developed Caribbean Commonwealth countries. It is based partly on the processing of agricultural products (sugar, citrus, rice and corn). Dominating the sector is the Williamson Company, a United States-owned garment manufacturer which currently employs 500 persons and intends to enlarge its operations to employ some 700-750 persons. This firm produces wholly for export. There are two other clothing plants, a flour mill, two breweries, two citrus processing plants and two sugar factories, plus a number of small sawmills, woodworking shops and distilleries.

57. The industrial development strategy of the territorial Government is based on the utilization of local raw materials, the promotion of intersectoral linkage, the encouragement of import substitution enterprises, increased production of export goods and the encouragement of local and foreign investment. It was reported that private enterprise invested over \$BZE 50 million during the period 1974-1979.

58. There was an increase in industrial production during the period under review. Among the industries which expanded were the garment industry, battery assembly, tire recapping, forest products and food processing. The garment industry, which exported \$BZE 18.9 million in goods in 1978, was expected to show a substantial increase in 1980. Garments for the domestic market were competitive with imports, hence providing a saving in foreign exchange. Domestic production of paper products supplied over 75 per cent of local demand. The output of beer and stout was expected to be lower than the 1978 level of 3 million litres as a result of time lost from mechanical breakdowns.

### E. Petroleum and minerals

59. Esso Ventures and the Anschutz Overseas Corporations, both of the United States, continued to conduct geological surveys in the Territory. At the end of

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negotiations were in progress for the granting of three concessions. In July 1979 it was reported that Pan American Ocean Graphix granted a concession for 20 oil prospecting blocks of approximately 10,000 square kilometres, mostly in the shelf of Toledo. It also included an area in the south near the border with Mexico. During the past 28 years (offshore) have been sunk.

Amichutz Overseas Corporation continued to prospect the south half of Belize. Traces of several minerals in small quantities.

#### F. Tourism

According to information provided by the United Kingdom Consulate in 1978 and spent approximately \$BZE 10 million. In his recent address (see para. 20 above) that the construction of a large hotel in Belize City and the plan to build a convention-style hotel in Belmopan.

#### G. Money and credit

The Belize Monetary Authority continued to play a crucial role in development activities and in the control of foreign exchange. In 1979, the total money supply (i.e. demand deposits and savings) stood at \$BZE 99.7 million. The total foreign exchange reserves stood at \$BZE 15.2 million (\$BZE 32.0 million in 1978).

The Government has strengthened and expanded the service of the Development Finance Corporation (DFC). During the period 1974-1979, DFC



tion, which included new alignments. The Hummingbird and Southern  
improved and sections of the Western Highway were under

A total of 12 new bridges were built in the Toledo, Stann Creek,  
Walk districts. Work was started on a bridge which will cross the  
Burrell Boom and preparation was under way for the construction of  
bridge in Orange Walk Town to cross the New River. In addition, the  
constructed more than 291 kilometres of feeder roads for access to sugar,  
and other crops.

phase of the new deep-water harbour was completed and dedicated in  
work was in progress or soon to begin on warehouses and a Port  
building. The harbour project provided for parking facilities and  
estate. In addition, eight new jetties were built and modern  
installed in eight lighthouses. A contract was signed for a further  
to be fitted with new solar lights. Work continued on coastal  
Belize City and other areas exposed to erosion of the coastline.

Improvements carried out to the Territory's airports included the  
The apron and parking area at Belize International Airport,  
Improvements to the Silva Airstrip at Belmopan and the airstrip at San  
completion of an airstrip at Sarteneja in the Corozal District. The  
Bureau was provided with new equipment including a radar system.

1979, the Belize Telecommunication Authority signed a contract for the  
telephone system at a cost of \$BZE 16 million. With the  
Cable and Wireless (West Indies) Ltd., the Territory's external  
were improved by the installation of a satellite earth station  
will become the property of

1978 negotiations were in progress for the granting of three new oil prospecting licences. In July 1979 it was reported that Pan American Oil and Gas Company of Mexico had been granted a concession for 20 oil prospecting licences which covered an area of approximately 10,000 square kilometres, mostly in deep water off the continental shelf of Toledo. It also included an area in the north of the Territory near the border with Mexico. During the past 28 years some 35 test wells (11 of them offshore) have been sunk.

60. The Anschutz Overseas Corporation continued to prospect for hardrock minerals in the southern half of Belize. Traces of several minerals were discovered, but none in commercial quantities.

#### F. Tourism

61. According to information provided by the United Kingdom, over 24,000 visitors came to Belize in 1978 and spent approximately \$BZE 10 million. The Premier announced in his recent address (see para. 20 above) that tenders had been invited for the construction of a large hotel in Belize City and that preparations were in progress to build a convention-style hotel in Belmopan.

#### G. Money and credit

62. The Belize Monetary Authority continued to play a crucial role in the Government's development activities and in the control of foreign exchange. At the end of November 1979, the total money supply (i.e. demand deposits and cash, plus fixed deposits and savings) stood at \$BZE 99.7 million. The Authority's foreign assets stood at \$BZE 15.2 million (\$BZE 32.0 million in 1978).

63. The Government has strengthened and expanded the services of the Development Finance Corporation (DFC). During the period 1974-1979, DFC made the following loans: agriculture, \$BZE 12.0 million; industry and tourism, \$BZE 5.4 million; and housing, \$BZE 388,490.

64. At the end of November 1979, demand deposits and savings at commercial banks totalled \$BZE 93.6 million. Loans and advances stood at \$BZE 89.9 million (\$BZE 67.1 million for the same period in 1978), of which agriculture accounted for \$BZE 18.5 million. The net foreign reserve position of the commercial banks and the Monetary Authority was \$BZE 9.8 million.

#### H. Infrastructure

65. Infrastructural development continued to be a major aspect of Government policy and over the past five years progress has been reported in the development of roads, ports, air and telecommunications, electricity, water and sewerage. Among the more important projects already completed or being undertaken were the following.

66. The first section of the Northern Highway was completed and work started on  
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the second section, which included new alignments. The Hummingbird and Southern Highways were improved and sections of the Western Highway were under reconstruction. A total of 12 new bridges were built in the Toledo, Stann Creek, Cayo and Orange Walk districts. Work was started on a bridge which will cross the Belize River at Burrell Boom and preparation was under way for the construction of a permanent bridge in Orange Walk Town to cross the New River. In addition, the Government constructed more than 291 kilometres of feeder roads for access to sugar, rice, banana and other crops.

67. The first phase of the new deep-water harbour was completed and dedicated in July 1979. Work was in progress or soon to begin on warehouses and a Port Administration building. The harbour project provided for parking facilities and an industrial estate. In addition, eight new jetties were built and modern equipment was installed in eight lighthouses. A contract was signed for a further 14 lighthouses to be fitted with new solar lights. Work continued on coastal protection in Belize City and other areas exposed to erosion of the coastline.

68. Recent improvements carried out to the Territory's airports included the enlargement of the apron and parking area at Belize International Airport, unspecified improvements to the Silva Airstrip at Belmopan and the airstrip at San Pedro and the completion of an airstrip at Sarteneja in the Corozal District. The Belize Weather Bureau was provided with new equipment including a radar system.

69. During 1979, the Belize Telecommunication Authority signed a contract for the expansion of the telephone system at a cost of \$BZE 16 million. With the co-operation of Cable and Wireless (West Indies) Ltd., the Territory's external telecommunications were improved by the installation of a satellite earth station at Belmopan. Under the arrangements made this station will become the property of the Government of Belize.

70. Improvements to the water and sewerage systems in Belize City and other areas in the Territory were in various stages of completion. It was also reported that a well drilling programme had provided wells and pumps in all six districts and that the sewerage lagoon in Belize City had been completed and sewer pipes were being installed.

71. According to press reports, Belize Airways Limited (BAL), one of three international airlines operating in the Territory, suspended all flights in early January 1980. The airline was established in 1978, and operated a fleet of five Boeing 727 aircraft. It provided daily round trip service to Miami and San Salvador. During 1979, as a result of escalating fuel and other operating costs, the airline experienced severe financial difficulties; as a result, airport fees were outstanding to the Miami Municipal Airport authorities, the Government of Belize and various suppliers. The other two airlines indicated that they would increase their flights in order to accommodate BAL passengers.

#### I. Public finance

72. In his address on the state of the nation, Premier Price stated that a new

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economic development plan for the period 1980-1983 had been published and that its primary objective was the continued growth of the Belizean economy. That would be achieved by a greater degree of self-sufficiency, expansion of food production and import substitution. The Premier recalled that the World Bank economic mission to the Territory had commented that continued economic growth was indicated through 1983. Public sector capital expenditure under the plan was estimated at \$BZE 362 million.

73. Following a decision taken by the Cabinet on 8 January 1980, it was announced that the Government's budget year would be changed from the calendar year to the period beginning 1 April and ending 31 March. This change would bring the Territory in line with other Governments and international agencies which were partners in Belize's economic co-operation programmes for development. The Ministry of Finance was reported to have made the necessary arrangements to carry on the fiscal work of the Government until the 1980/81 budget, which was to be presented to the National Assembly in March, had been approved.

#### Budget estimates for 1980/81

74. The budget estimates presented to the National Assembly on 14 March 1980 provided for a total expenditure of \$BZE 138.7 million (\$BZE 125.1 million in 1979) which comprised \$BZE 58.6 million for the recurrent budget (\$BZE 52.3 million in 1979) and \$BZE 80.1 million for the local capital budget and the economic co-operation programme (\$BZE 72.8 million in 1979). An additional \$BZE 16.9 million was budgeted for the statutory bodies. New tax measures were introduced to add a further \$BZE 2.8 million to revenue during the year.

75. In introducing the budget estimates, the Premier disclosed that the Government had continued to balance its budget and had ended 1979 with a surplus of \$BZE 1.6 million. He stated that the surplus came at a time when the world economy faced slow economic growth, inflation, imbalances in trade accounts and restrictions of trade by protectionism. He identified certain conditions which beset the Territory, including costly fuel in short supply, unemployment, lack of skilled personnel and pressing demands for social and physical infrastructural development, and noted that they were similar to the problems of other "poor and developing countries".

76. The Premier stated that his Government's budget strategy had the following objectives: (a) to reduce dependence on a few crops and increase food production, local consumption and import substitution; (b) to increase savings and the participation of Belizeans in key sectors of the economy; (c) to improve the balance of payments; and (d) to raise the standard of living by an increase in employment, self-help and greater participation in the process of social and economic development in a balanced framework of rural and urban improvement.

77. The Government continued to participate in economic co-operation arrangements with the Governments of Canada and the United Kingdom, CDB and the European Development Fund.

#### J. Caribbean economic integration

78. Major developments concerning the Territory's participation in the Caribbean economic integration movement are outlined in the previous report of the Special Committee. <sup>13/</sup> It will be recalled that the Caribbean Group for Co-operation in Economic Development, at its second meeting held at Washington D.C. from 4 to 9 June 1979, agreed among other things: (a) to continue the activities of the Technical Assistance Steering Committee (TASC) which prepares and co-ordinates technical assistance programmes for the region; and (b) to establish a Task Force on Private Sector Activities, consisting of 10 of the members of the Group, to examine, inter alia, the problems of, and opportunities for, private investment and to make recommendations on ways to stimulate private sector activities.

79. The first meeting of the Task Force was held in Barbados in January 1980 under the chairmanship of Mr. G. Arthur Brown, Deputy Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and former Governor of the Central Bank of Jamaica. Following the meeting, a spokesman for the Task Force stated that it had decided to approach the problem on a country-by-country basis. For that purpose a group of economic consultants would visit all participating countries, including Belize, between January and March, and would provide the Task Force with technical information and recommendations. The Task Force, which was due to meet in March and again in April, would prepare its report for the consideration of the Caribbean Group at its 3rd meeting, to be held in May 1980.

80. The Territory continued its membership in CARICOM and its associated institutions, in particular CDB. The Territory also continued to co-operate with other Caribbean countries in various fields of endeavour and to participate in regional conferences and projects established by Governments and international organizations for the Caribbean region.

#### 4. SOCIAL CONDITIONS

##### A. Labour

81. The Government continued its efforts, during the period under review, to increase employment in the Territory. It was estimated that about 40 per cent of the labour force (estimated at 39,000 in 1976) was engaged in agricultural production and a further 1,500 in manufacturing, mainly in the Belize City area. As noted above (see para. 56), one clothing manufacturer which currently employs 500 persons, plans to expand production to employ between 700 and 750. The Government was reported to be conducting feasibility studies into additional schemes which would result in greater employment, including, in particular, revitalization of the timber industry.

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<sup>13/</sup> Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 23 (A/34/23/Rev.1), Vol. IV, chap. XXIX, annex, paras. 72-85.

82. The Premier announced in his 1979 speech on the state of the nation that the National Assembly had enacted legislation to amend the Labour Law to provide, among other things, for payment of sick leave for up to 16 days a year, the establishment of a Shop Wages Council, a minimum wage for shop assistants and severance pay.

#### B. Housing

83. In order to provide for expansion in Belize City, about 400 hectares of swamp land were reclaimed, providing 600 house lots and space for warehouses, parking facilities and an industrial estate. In the period from 1974 to 1979, the Government built 500 low-cost houses for purchase through the Ministry of Housing, the Reconstruction and Development Corporation and DFC, while the latter institutions issued housing loans amounting to about \$BZE 7 million. It was reported in September 1979 that the Government was still administering the hurricane rehabilitation programme with funds provided under the United Kingdom-Belize economic co-operation programme.

#### C. Public health

84. According to the information transmitted by the United Kingdom, the medical staff and institutions in the Territory in 1978 remained unchanged from the previous year. The Chief Medical Officer was assisted in the administration of health services by two medical officers, a principal nursing officer and other staff. There were seven government hospitals, one in each of five districts, one in Belize City and one in Belmopan.

85. In September 1979 the Premier stated that the new Orange Walk Hospital was in operation and that preparations were in progress for a new hospital at Belize City. He stated further that the old Seaview Hospital had become structurally unsafe and had been abandoned; that a health clinic had been built in San Pedro, in the Toledo district, and that ambulances had been bought for all district towns. He added that mobile health clinics served the rural areas.

### 5. EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS

86. Education is compulsory for children between the ages of 6 and 14 years. According to the report of the administering Power, in 1978 there were 33,817 pupils enrolled in 13 government and 197 government-aided primary schools. In addition, there were approximately 1,000 pupils attending 14 private primary schools throughout the Territory. It was estimated that about 90 per cent of children of primary school age were currently enrolled in school.

87. According to the same report, the foundation was securely laid at the primary level and emphasis was being placed on the development of education at the secondary level, by increasing the number of places and diversifying the curricula in order to meet more fully the varied needs, aptitudes and interests of students at that level.

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At the beginning of the 1978/79 school year, 1,750 pupils, or 58 per cent of those who had completed their primary education, were transferred to secondary schools. On the average, about 25 per cent of those initially enrolled did not complete their secondary education. Of the 5,970 students registered at the 22 secondary schools in December 1978, 377 were on government scholarships. Of the 290 students at the sixth form (Junior College) level, 75 were on government scholarships. Four of the secondary schools were government schools; two of those were free and the other two charged fees of \$BZE 3.00 and \$BZE 5.00 per month. Private school fees ranged from \$BZE 10.00 to \$BZE 20.00 per month.

88. The Belize Technical College, established in 1973, was reorganized during 1978 and required entrants to have attended secondary school previously. Enrollment in December 1978 totalled 556, of whom 259 were pursuing General Certificate of Education courses in scientific and technical subjects and 297 were taking craft and technical courses. At the Belize Teachers' College, which offered a two-year diploma course in teacher education, 78 students were enrolled in the first year programme and 79 in the second year in 1978. Scholarships were also awarded to teachers to follow advanced courses in education abroad. 11

89. In his address in September 1979, the Premier listed some of the achievements of his Government in education during its last term in office. These included completion of Ecumenical High School in Stann Creek District, and Corozal Community College as well as a second junior secondary school at Belize City. Work was expected to start soon on three new junior secondary schools. The Premier added that, in keeping with its policy of assistance to religious schools, the Government had helped religious missions to build 20 primary schools in the six districts, bringing the total of church schools in the Territory to about 200 with an enrolment of approximately 34,000 pupils.

90. The Premier stated further that, under Government sponsorship and in co-operation with The University of the West Indies, the new Belize College of Arts, Science and Technology would open on 17 September 1979. With its three associate colleges, St. John's Sixth Form College, The Belize Teachers' College and The Belize Technical College, the new institution would go a long way towards fulfilling the Territory's need for post-secondary education, which formerly could only be obtained abroad.

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