

# **Big Game, Small Town**

**Clientelism and Democracy  
in the Modern Politics of Belize  
(1954 to 2011)**

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## **Declaration**

I, Dylan Gregory Vernon, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in my thesis.

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## **Abstract**

Presenting Belize as an illustrative and critical case of clientelist democracy in the Commonwealth Caribbean, this thesis explores the origins of clientelist politics alongside the pre-independence birth of political parties, analyses its rapid expansion after independence in 1981 and assesses its implications for democratic governance. Based on qualitative research, including interviews with major political leaders, the thesis contends that, despite Belize's positive post-colonial reputation for consolidating formal democracy, the concurrent expansion of clientelism, as both an electoral strategy and a mode of participation, ranks high among the worrying challenges affecting the quality of its democracy.

Although intense party competition in a context of persistent poverty is central to explaining the trajectory of clientelism in Belize, the Westminster model of governance, the disappearance of substantive policy distinctions among parties and the embrace of neoliberal economic policies fuelled its expansion. Small-state size and multi-ethnicity have also been contributing factors. Even though the thousands of monthly dyadic transactions in constituencies are largely rational individual choices with short-term distributive benefits, the thesis concludes that, collectively, these practices lead to irrational governance behaviour and damaging macro-political consequences. Political participation is devalued, public resources are wasted, governance reform becomes more difficult and political corruption is facilitated. As a parallel informal welfare system has become embedded, politicians and citizens alike have become trapped in a 'big game' of mutual clientelist dependency.

A comparative analysis of post-independence political developments in other Commonwealth Caribbean states shows that the expansion of political clientelism in the context of competitive party politics is significantly path dependent. Besides contributing to the political historiography of modern Belize, this thesis demonstrates that national studies of small clientelist democracies can provide valuable insights into the ways in which informal political practices interact with a state's formal institutions to shape the quality of democracy itself.

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## List of Key Acronyms and Abbreviations

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| ACB       | Association of Concerned Belizeans                     |
| ANDA      | Association of National Development Agencies           |
| BELTRAIDE | Belize Trade and Investment Development Service        |
| BNA       | Belize National Archives                               |
| BNHL      | Belize National Heritage Library                       |
| BNCR      | Belize National Court Registry                         |
| BPA       | Belize Parliamentary Archives                          |
| CARICOM   | Caribbean Community                                    |
| CEO       | Chief Executive Officer (formerly Permanent Secretary) |
| CPA       | Country Poverty Assessment                             |
| CPI       | Corruption Perception Index                            |
| CSO       | Civil Society Organisation                             |
| CCT       | Conditional Cash Transfer                              |
| EBC       | Elections and Boundaries Commission                    |
| EBD       | Elections and Boundaries Department                    |
| FPTP      | First-past-the-post                                    |
| FY        | Financial Year   |
| GC        | Gini coefficient                                       |
| GNI       | Gross National Income                                  |
| GoB       | Government of Belize                                   |
| GPAC      | George Price Archival Collection                       |
| GWU       | General Workers Union                                  |
| HDI       | Human Development Index                                |
| HSD       | Human Services Department                              |
| House     | House of Representatives                               |
| IMF       | International Monetary Fund                            |
| Katalyst  | Katalyst Institute for Public Policy and Research      |
| MDG       | Millennium Development Goals                           |
| MP        | Member of Parliament                                   |
| NABR      | National Alliance for Belizean Rights                  |
| NCP       | Non-Contributory Pension                               |
| NIP       | National Independence Party                            |
| OAS       | Organisation of American States                        |
| PNP       | People's National Party                                |
| PRC       | Political Reform Commission                            |
| PSC       | Public Services Commission                             |
| PUP       | People's United Party                                  |
| SHIE      | Samuel Haynes Institute of Excellence                  |
| SIB       | Statistical Institute of Belize                        |
| SPEAR     | Society for the Promotion of Education and Research    |
| TI        | Transparency International                             |
| UB        | University of Belize                                   |
| UDP       | United Democratic Party                                |
| UNDP      | United Nations Development Programme                   |
| VIP       | Vision Inspired by the People                          |
| WGI       | Worldwide Governance Indicators                        |

**FIGURE 1**  
**Political Map of Belize**  
**Showing Six Administrative Districts**

Source: <http://www.ezilon.com/maps/north-america/belize-maps.html>



## Preface and Acknowledgements

My decision to do a PhD on the subject of political clientelism has its roots in the stimulating years I worked as a governance reform advocate in Belize between 1992 and 2009. This work included coordinating a democracy reform advocacy campaign, chairing a national political reform commission, penning numerous governance-related documents and participating in almost every governance improvement committee set up during this period. By 2005, it had become frustratingly clear that these reform efforts were having negligible impact on the post-independence trend of democratic decay. In fact, the governance situation had mostly deteriorated. Many of the dozens of recommendations made by various reform commissions had been ignored, and those enacted did not seem to make much difference. It was, in the lyrics of that Sting song, 'heavy clouds but no rain'.

In hindsight, part of the problem was that the reform campaigns had focused on constitutional and procedural matters—relegating the few concrete results to largely ineffectual 'paper reforms' of formal democracy. One critical example of this limitation crystallised for me in the days leading up to the 2008 national election. It was sobering to watch television footage of hundreds of people swarming around constituency offices of incumbent politicians for a share of the 'Venezuela money'.<sup>1</sup> Several persons publicly stated that they would vote for the incumbent party only if they got 'some'. The reform campaigns and commissions had glossed over a huge part of the 'real' politics, through which many citizens and politicians engage each other. It became a critical part of my reflections on the challenges facing democracy in Belize and similar states.

However, it was not until after I began my PhD in late 2009 and engaged with more of the literature on democratisation that I refined my broad questions on this aspect of Belize's political reform experiences. For this my principal supervisor, Professor Kevin Middlebrook, deserves major credit. I remember well the moment, after listening to my evolving thesis thoughts, when he urged

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<sup>1</sup> The government had announced in early January 2008 that Venezuela had made a \$20,000,000 grant to Belize, mostly for housing support. Most of these funds were rapidly 'disbursed' through candidates of the incumbent party in the four-week period before the 7 February 2008 general election (Office of the Auditor General, 2009a).

me to read yet another book: Javier Auyero's (2000) *Poor People's Politics*. This led me back to Carl Stone's (1980) and Charlene Edie's (1991) seminal works on clientelism in Jamaica. It was a case of 'right books, right time', and it was pretty clear, thereafter, that political clientelism was my analytical angle.

Rather than complicating the research required, the years I spent in the field in Belize proved to be a clear plus. Apart from providing firsthand knowledge of most of the political context and useful contacts, the non-partisan nature of my former work (across various parties in government) opened many doors that may have been closed to most journalists and PhD students. Without these advantages, it is unlikely that I would have been able to access certain information, conduct 69 key informant interviews and gather views from over 100 citizens. I am especially privileged to have interviewed the first prime minister of Belize, George Price, just months before his passing in September 2011, former prime ministers Sir Manuel Esquivel and the Honourable Said Musa, as well as Prime Minister Dean Barrow.

I take this opportunity to express my profound gratitude to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom, which funded my PhD studies. I extend special thanks to Professor Middlebrook for the sound supervision, guidance and meticulous reviews along the way. He has advanced my knowledge of politics and level of academic rigour immensely. Dr Kate Quinn, my second supervisor, gave constructive advice and insights on Caribbean political history. I would also like to thank Larry Vernon (my dad) who assisted with my document research from afar; Crystal Vernon (my mom) whose frequent calls and e-mails kept me grounded; and my colleagues at the Society for the Promotion of Educations and Research (SPEAR) who helped forge my passion for improving the quality of democracy. I am additionally grateful to Michael Bradley of the National Heritage Library, Elsie Alpuche of the George Price Archival Collection, Dr Herman Byrd and the staff at the Belize National Archives, and Clarita Pech at the Office of the Clerk of the National Assembly. I acknowledge the advice and support I have received from Anna Rossington, Karen Vernon, Marlon Vernon, Josie Vernon, Ashley Williamson, Charles Gibson and family, Tuki Moreno, Dr Steve Cushion, Godfrey Smith, Dr Assad

Shoman, Dr Anne MacPherson, Professor Mary Turner, Dr Emily Morris, Dr Paul Sutton, Dr Jean Stubbs, Lisel Alamilla, Robert Pennell, Leonie Jordan, Phil Westman and Debra Lewis. I also extend a special thanks to all my colleagues at the Institute of the Americas, University College London. Most importantly, this thesis would not have been possible without the assistance of all my interviewees—both politicians and citizens alike—and I trust that I have adequately reflected their views. They have allowed me to demonstrate how an interview-rich research methodology can contribute to advancing the analysis of the informal and, often, unspoken ‘handout politics’ through which so many Belizeans engage their politicians on a daily basis.

*NOTE:*

- *All dollar figures (\$) are in Belize currency, unless otherwise stated. US\$1 = BZ\$2 (fixed rate) and £1 = circa BZ\$3.02 at March, 2013.*
- *All interviews that were conducted in Belize Kriol and Spanish have been translated by the author to English. Some Kriol words have been kept in cases where the meaning is clear to English-language readers.*
- *The positions of interviewees indicated are those at the date of the interviews. For all interviewees who are former or aspiring politicians only the relevant political profile information is provided.*

# INTRODUCTION

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## CONCEPTUALISING POLITICAL CLIENTELISM FOR A CASE STUDY OF BELIZE

### Revisiting Clientelism and Democracy in a Commonwealth Caribbean State

Belize, a small multi-ethnic state of 313,000 people on the Caribbean coast of Central America, transitioned from British colony to independent democracy in September 1981.<sup>2</sup> Although this continental location is highly relevant to its history and development, Belize's process of decolonisation, Westminster parliamentary model of governance and much of its modern politics, designate it as decidedly more Commonwealth Caribbean<sup>3</sup> than Latin American in political identity. Similar to other independent states of the Commonwealth Caribbean, Belize has exhibited a mixed and contradictory record of progress in consolidating aspects of formal democracy, on the one hand, and worrying challenges to substantive democracy, on the other. Using Belize as an illustrative and critical case in the Commonwealth Caribbean, this thesis revisits and critiques the academic debate on one of the least researched of these challenges: the expansion and deepening entrenchment of political clientelism.

As conceptualised for this study, political clientelism is defined as an informal and dynamic political exchange between individual or collective clients, who provide or promise political support, and patrons, who provide or promise a variety of targeted and divisible resources and favours.<sup>4</sup> This thesis enquires not 'if' political clientelism exists in Belize, but how its level of prevalence and specific contextual manifestations affect its democracy and development over a specific period of time. This introductory chapter presents the specific research questions explored for Belize, reviews the concept of political clientelism and its

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<sup>2</sup> Belize's official name was British Honduras until 1973. A population of 312,698 was recorded in the 2010 census (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2011: 42).

<sup>3</sup> The term 'Commonwealth Caribbean' is used herein to refer specifically to the 12 independent states of the region: Belize, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Guyana, Barbados, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Kitts and Nevis, Grenada, Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, and the Bahamas. The term 'region' is used herein to refer to these 12 Commonwealth Caribbean states, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>4</sup> The justification for using this definition is discussed in the third section of this Introduction.

relevant literature, defines relevant terms and summaries the analytical framework and research methodology employed.

### ***The Research Questions***

As part of the Commonwealth Caribbean, Belize belongs to a set of states that receives positive assessments and high rankings for democracy. Observations such as “no other region, in what has been called the Third World, has had, for so long so many liberal polities” and that “the Caribbean’s capacity to sustain liberal democratic politics is impressive” (Domínguez, 1993: 7) have been so often repeated as to be commonplace. These favourable assessments have come largely, but not exclusively, from the findings of quantitative studies that attempt to correlate aspects of formal democracy with specific independent variables. Commonwealth Caribbean democracy has been positively correlated to the level of economic development (e.g., Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens, 1992: 227), to former British colonial status, (e.g., Clague, Gleason, and Knack, 2001; Huntington, 1991), to small-state status (e.g., Sutton, 2001; Duncan and Woods, 2007) and to the presence of the Westminster parliamentary system (e.g., Hinds, 2008; Lijphart, 1999; Stepan and Skach, 1993). This narrative of flourishing democracy is further corroborated by the results of most multi-variable cross-national studies. One of the most cited and comprehensive of these, the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), has ranked the 12 independent states of the Commonwealth Caribbean region above all other developing world regions for all six of its aggregate indicators (voice and accountability, political stability and absence of violence/terrorism, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law and control of corruption), with an average percentile rank of 67.1 per cent for 2008.<sup>5</sup> This is significantly higher, for instance, than the 2008 scores for other developing regions. For example, Latin America ranked at 42.9 per cent and Sub-Saharan Africa at 30.1 per cent.

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<sup>5</sup> Here and elsewhere, WGI figures are calculated from the World Bank’s WGI data tables for 2008, located at <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>. The WGI incorporates a weighted average of 441 disaggregated indicators to compare 212 states across six broad aggregates of democracy between 1996 and 2008 (Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi, 2009). The closer the score is to 100 per cent, the better the rank. Although such quantitative attempts to ‘measure’ democracy have well-known limitations, these can be useful for giving indications of cross-national trends over time.

Belize's claim to a share of this positive record of formal democracy is understandable. Since the constitutional establishment of Belize as an independent parliamentary democracy in 1981, there have been seven free and fair general elections, with high average voter turnout of 76.9 per cent, five peaceful alternations of power, and the establishment of an active civil society sector.<sup>6</sup> Unlike other multi-ethnic states in the region, such as Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, Belize has avoided ethnically-divisive party politics.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, an intensive political reform debate, led by civil society groups, has resulted in dozens of constitutional amendments and legislative initiatives with the objectives of expanding civil liberties, improving access to justice, enhancing formal democratic participation, and promoting transparency and accountability in government.<sup>8</sup> Such governance achievements probably contributed to the assessment of the 2008 Commonwealth election observer team that "Belize enjoys a mature democracy and a well-functioning electoral process" (Commonwealth Secretariat, 2008: 16).

On the other hand, a rather more dubious and worrying picture of Commonwealth Caribbean democracy also exists. After a tumultuous and ethnically-divisive transition to independence in 1966, Guyana's elections under Forbes Burnham (1964-1992) were notorious for systematic rigging of ballots. In 1979, Grenada became the first independent Commonwealth Caribbean state to change governments by coup d'état. In 1990, a Muslim group (Jamaat al Muslimeen) attempted a coup d'état in Trinidad and Tobago in which the prime minister and most of his cabinet were held hostage for six days. Several general elections in Jamaica, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, have been marred by high levels of partisan political violence. More recently, qualitative studies that look beyond formal democracy argue that there has been a clear and worsening trend in much of the post-independence period. Ryan (2001: 75) reflected these concerns in his warnings that "liberal democracy is in grave danger in the Anglophone Caribbean" and unless there is a renewal of democracy, the

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<sup>6</sup> See, Fernández (1989), Grant (2004: 7, 46 and 61-62) and Griner (2005: 13) for favourable assessments of formal democracy in Belize.

<sup>7</sup> As elaborated in Chapter 1, Belize's ethnic groups include Mestizo, Creole, Maya, Garifuna, East Indian and others.

<sup>8</sup> Since 1981, Belize has witnessed at least 25 separate governance reform processes and dozens of constitutional amendments as part of eight amendment acts (Catzim, 2006b; Vernon, 2009).

region's states "will be lumped with other states that are negatively classified along the governance continuum."

The limitations of the inherited Westminster parliamentary model to deliver good governance have also been the subject of several studies. Low levels of popular participation in the construction of the original political institutions have led to critical questions about their relevance to the political culture and small-size features of the region's states (e.g., McIntosh, 2002: 52-53; Singham, 1968: 329). For instance, due to the small number of constituency seats appropriate for smaller populations, more than half of the elected representatives in parliament are often appointed to cabinets. Side effects of this fusing of executive and legislative powers include 'rubber-stamp' legislatures, the absence of effective legislative oversight, invariably weak backbenches, and the added propensity for personality-based and particularistic politics. Concerns have also been expressed about the poor performance and inadequacies of the electoral and party systems in a small-state context. For example, assessments by Payne (1988), Ryan (1999) and Munroe (1996) have exposed the unfairness of first-past-the-post (FPTP) systems in which winning parties control all, opposition parties are virtually powerless, and party-politics are divisive, personal and unregulated. A recurring theme is that electoral democracy in the region "has not led to either broader participation in national decision-making within formal institutions and in wider society" nor to substantive democracy (Hinds, 2008: 388).

Belize exhibits many of these challenges to democracy. Along with Jamaica and Guyana, Belize received the lowest WGI scores for 1998 to 2008 compared with those of the other states in the region. Overall, Belize evidenced a worsening trend in this 10-year period, with 2008 scores below the 50 percentile rankings for 'control of corruption', 'government effectiveness' and 'regulatory quality' and 'rule of law', and just 50.7 per cent for 'political stability'.<sup>9</sup> Further evidence of Belize's democratic decay appears in several qualitative studies<sup>10</sup> and in a large number of governance reports on Belize's political system and

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<sup>9</sup> <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/index.asp>. The downward trend for 'control of corruption' reflected the drop in the Transparency International Corruption Perception Index from number 46 in 2003 to 109 in 2008.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, the articles by Shoman (1987, 1990, 1997) and Vernon (2000a, 2000b, 2008).

practice.<sup>11</sup> In particular, the Political Reform Commission (PRC) (2000) highlighted problems related to the lack of effective separation of executive, legislative and judicial powers, the absence of legislative oversight, the inadequacies of the FPTP electoral system, the prevalence of divisive two-party politics and political tribalism, the pervasiveness of political corruption, the lack of campaign finance regulation, the poor record of political participation (outside of elections) and growing voter bribery.

It is against this contradictory backdrop of simultaneous democratic advance and democratic decay that political clientelism comes into sharper focus as a particularly persistent challenge to mainstream notions of democracy in Belize and the region. Even though political clientelism is invariably introduced in the academic literature as characteristic of all polities, regardless of state scale, stage of development and system of government, it is also overwhelmingly presented as anti-democratic. Mainstream theories of democratisation have generally held that political clientelism should diminish as a problematic and informal mode of citizen participation and resource allocation when new democracies consolidate transparent governance institutions and develop new public spaces for autonomous organising (e.g., Huntington, 1968; Weingrod, 1968). Most studies on democratisation that highlight the persistence of political clientelism have focused mostly on states that transitioned, sometimes violently, from autocratic governments to formal democracy in the second half of the twentieth century. As was the general experience of the Commonwealth Caribbean, Belize's decolonisation and democratisation were marked more by peaceful political tutelage and short bouts of civil protest than by violent overthrow of entrenched autocrats. Despite this political history and an overall positive record of formal democracy since independence, Belize has witnessed the rapid expansion and deep entrenchment of political clientelism.

In contrast to the relative abundance of political clientelism studies on Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe over the past three decades, the Commonwealth Caribbean has received but sparse research attention. With the major exception of the seminal works on party-based clientelism in Jamaica by

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<sup>11</sup> Since 1981, there have been at least six government-commissioned reports and seven reports by civil society groups covering all areas of governance.



Stone (1980) and Edie (1991), and as a variable to explore other political phenomena,<sup>12</sup> there has been no comprehensive and dedicated research on political clientelism on any other state in the region. As Barrow-Giles and Tennyson (2006: 146) noted, “vote buying and related practices” occur but are “not openly discussed.” Importantly, the thin body of dedicated research material on clientelism in the region is further limited by the near total absence of comprehensive analysis of its macro-political implications, and by the total absence of a cross-national comparative perspective.

Similarly, there is a dearth of political clientelism research on Belize. As in the rest of the region, the issue has been occasionally addressed in the context of other studies. These do indicate increasing concerns about clientelist activities. For example, Shoman (1987, 1997) pointed to the growth of party-based clientelism as political parties emerged and consolidated after the 1950s. Moberg (1991, 1992) demonstrated how party-based patronage spread to rural villages in southern Belize. The PRC (2000: 119) found that the “practice of political parties and candidates giving monies and gifts for votes...while illegal is rampant” in post-independence Belize. Rosberg (2005) exposed the deep penetration of clientelism in the execution of international development projects since the 1990s. Additionally, a scan of political news stories in the local media<sup>13</sup> over the past two decades points to an increasing number of allegations and counter-allegations directly related to political clientelism.

Indications of significant levels of political clientelism have not been limited to national studies. For example, Commonwealth Secretariat election observers (2008: 6) reported that there were allegations of votes being exchanged for land, loans, and money and for facilitating access to Belizean citizenship in the lead up to the 2008 general elections. In a 2010 AmericasBarometer survey on voter bribery in 22 Caribbean and Latin American countries, Belize ranked fourth highest overall, second of (all seven) Central American countries and first

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<sup>12</sup> For example, clientelism has been used to analyse political violence (e.g., Clarke, 2006; Sives, 2002, 2010), tribal politics (e.g., Figueroa and Sives, 2002; Figueroa and Sives, 2003) and the political influence of the poor (e.g., Gray, 2004; Ryan, McCree, and St. Bernard, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> Examples of these stories are presented throughout the thesis and a list of 30 such stories appears at Appendix 5.

of four Commonwealth Caribbean countries<sup>14</sup> in incidence of citizens being offered benefits for votes (Faughnan and Zechmeister, 2011: 1-2). Overall, the available material suggests that the trading of political favour for political support in Belize is no longer just an election addendum, but a permanent state of affairs in the daily political relationships of exchange and influence between citizens and politicians.

With the premise that Belize is an illustrative and critical case of deeply-entrenched and still-expanding political clientelism in the region, this thesis re-examines the modern politics of Belize through the focused exploratory lens of political clientelism. In so doing, it seeks to expand the narrative of Belize's modern political historiography and revisit clientelism as a critical analytic and comparative construct for examining the challenges of democratic change in the small parliamentary democracies of the Commonwealth Caribbean. The research and analysis are organised around five questions:

- 1. How did political clientelism emerge in the formative period of Belize's modern politics?**
- 2. What are the principal manifestations of the expansion of political clientelism in Belize in the post-independence period?**
- 3. What factors have contributed to this high rate of expansion at the same time as formal democratic advances in Belize?**
- 4. What are the critical implications of widespread clientelism for the quality of Belize's democracy?**
- 5. How does the experience of Belize compare to experiences of other independent parliamentary democracies in the Commonwealth Caribbean?**

The thesis also considers whether the findings in the Belize case contribute any useful insights to the use of political clientelism as an analytic construct for exploring democratic change in similar developing states.

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<sup>14</sup> The other three Commonwealth Caribbean countries included in the poll were Jamaica, Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.

## **Political Clientelism and Democracy: Concepts, Variables and Implications**

### ***On Democracy and Political Clientelism***

Descriptions of the universality and longevity of clientelism, which permeate the literature, are testaments to its chameleon-like propensity for adaptation across varied contexts over time. There is little academic dispute that the systematic study of clientelism originated from anthropological research of dyadic, patriarchal and hierarchical relationships in traditional rural communities. This is often referred to as the 'old clientelism', and is broadly defined as a "form of particularistic, personal and dyadic exchange, usually characterised by a sense of obligation, and often also by an unequal balance of power between those involved" (Hopkin, 2006: 2).<sup>15</sup> This conceptualisation tended to limit studies of clientelism to the micro-analytical level of dyadic relationships, especially in small communities. Since the 1960s, a new generation of social scientists<sup>16</sup> have theorised clientelism from a more macro-political perspective as a "form of behaviour that becomes rational for people to pursue, given particular external conditions" in any political context, rather than only as "behaviour characteristic of particular [traditional] cultures" (Chapman, 1982: 3). Stokes (2007: 607) accurately divided this more recent literature on 'political' clientelism into two waves: "one inspired by the emergence of new nations [up to the 1960s], the second by the democratisation of large swaths of the developing world".<sup>17</sup> After a decline in research interest in political clientelism in the 1990s, there has again been renewed attention from political scientists in the past decade, as evidenced by an increase in the number of monographs, journal articles and conferences on the subject.

Observations that "an overwhelmingly negative image of clientelism permeates scholarly analysis" (Auyero, 1999: 298-299) and that political clientelism is usually seen as "lying at the far end of the institutional spectrum from democracy" (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith, 2002: 4) are confirmed by a review of

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<sup>15</sup> See, for example, the studies by Eisenstadt and Lemarchand (1981), Landé (1983), Graziano (1983), Kettering (1988) and Hopkin (2006) for good summary discussions of 'old clientelism'.

<sup>16</sup> Weingrod (1968), Scott (1969), Flynn (1974), Clapham (1982) and Eisenstadt and Roniger (1984) are representative of this first wave.

<sup>17</sup> For some states, including those of the Commonwealth Caribbean, there is very little distinction between their emergence as independent nations and their processes of democratisation.

the literature. This is especially discernible from the viewpoint of influential scholars such as Schumpeter (1976), Dahl (1971, 1989, 1997), Huntington (1968, 1991, 1997), Linz (2000) and Linz and Stepan (1996, 1997), who have focused largely on formal democracy—a term used, hereafter, to refer to the existence of a set of political institutions and basic civil liberties that facilitate the selection of leaders, who make governance decisions on behalf of citizens. For Linz and Stepan (1996: 3-7), for example, democracy is consolidated when “it is the only game in town” and meets basic criteria, including the existence of an active civil society, rules and laws to allow individual rights and the exercise of “control over public power and the state apparatus,” and “norms, institutions and regulations which...mediate between state and market”. From this procedural perspective political clientelism—‘another game in town’—is broadly seen as an undemocratic informal activity that corrupts formal modes of participation, but that should gradually wither away or be restrained as new democracies become consolidated, liberal values predominate and regulatory frameworks improve (e.g., Huntington, 1968; J. C. Scott, 1969). Even when Huntington allowed for the persistence of phenomena such as clientelism in the early stages of democratisation, he optimistically theorised it would decline in the face of political and institutional modernisation.<sup>18</sup> However, its persistence in advanced and emerging democracies alike suggests that achievements in formal democracy do not, alone, mitigate clientelism. Indeed, how scholars conceptualise democracy is important to how political clientelism itself is understood.

Although this study accepts that formal political institutions and rules are essential for democracy, it identifies with the views of scholars such as O’Donnell (1992, 1996, 2000, 2007), Whitehead (2002, 2001), Rueschemeyer, Stephens and Stephens (1992) and Huber, Rueschemeyer and Stephens (1997), who correctly exposed the limitations of approaches to democracy that are too procedural and prescriptive. Their general conceptualisation of democracy, and the one assumed for this study, can be summarised as a context-driven goal to be strived for through an on-going, dynamic and

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<sup>18</sup> Although Huntington (1968) argued that social modernisation can produce societal disorders, he suggested that these are mitigated by the emergence of strong political institutions and civil societies that promote formal political participation.

participatory process. As Huber et al. (1997: 324) persuasively argued, the overall goal can be construed as ‘social democracy’ characterised by “increasing equality in social and economic outcomes” and which is only achievable when there is both formal democracy, as well as what they denote as ‘participatory democracy’: “high levels of participation without systematic differences across social categories.”

As with all definitions of the much-debated concept of democracy, there are, arguably, normative and interpretivist elements embedded in the term ‘social democracy’, as conceived by Huber et al. Whitehead’s (2002: 7) metaphor of democracy as a boat at anchor is useful here: “There is both a core of meaning that is anchoring and a margin of contestation that is floating”. In the democratisation literature, formal democracy (the meaning of which is, itself, still disputed) is often presented as the ‘core’ and as almost everything else as ‘floating’.<sup>19</sup> This begs the question ‘What is democracy for?’—especially once the rules are in place for the selection of leaders to facilitate decision-making in a polity. As Shefter (2012: 51) has illustrated, many theorists have argued that “economic prosperity” and a more equal and just society should “follow political access” based on the decisions that such access can influence. This is not to say that all decisions will lead to these goals or that the process is a direct and flawless one, but that the decisions should, in the longer term, contribute to movement towards these goals. Indeed, some have contended that the failure to address problems of economic inequality can not only curtail participation in formal democracy (by determining how many and who get involved), but can also ‘push’ people into informal activities such as clientelism (Shefter, 2012: 41-43 and 52-58). Accepting that the precise outcomes are contextually determined, ‘social democracy’ is adopted as a core analytical concept for exploring both the causes and implications of political clientelism for Belize.

The on-going process towards the goal of deepening democracy is generally denoted ‘democratisation’. This term has been used, almost exclusively, since the 1990s to describe transitions to democracy from former authoritarian regimes in the developing world and Eastern Europe. However, this outcome-

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<sup>19</sup> For Whitehead (2002: 27) ‘more’ democracy “consists of progress towards a more rule-based, more consensual and more participatory type of politics.”

oriented democratising process is seldom straightforward and often messy, for, as O'Donnell (1996: 40) noted, "formal rules about how political institutions are supposed to work are often poor guides to what actually happens" in new democracies. Scholars who take a more substantive approach to democracy tend to view the expansion and persistence of political clientelism as one element of this 'messiness' characteristic of democratisation processes. It is this latter body of literature that is of more relevance to this study.

### ***Conceptualising and Defining Political Clientelism***<sup>20</sup>

The 50-plus years of peaks and troughs in the political clientelism scholarship have generated some lively academic debate on conceptual interpretations. Although revealing differences in interpretation, a review of this literature points to some common threads and assumptions. Overall, the definitions depict an informal relationship in which political actors (patrons), with access to demanded resources, exchange these for political support from citizens (clients) in need of resources.<sup>21</sup> Patrons and clients can have direct relationships, but as the volume of these expand, exchanges tend to be mediated by brokers. Sabet's (2005: 3) definition of brokers is sound: those community leaders who fill the "structural holes" between the network of clients "who have the right to vote but lack resources," and the network of patrons "who have access to resources and require political support." This critical liaison role of brokers makes them (potentially) powerful clientelist actors who can make decisions on who gets what and 'how much' they keep for themselves (Szwarcberg, 2012: 88-91).

Although most extant studies confine the term 'patron' to individual political actors, it has been illustrated that political institutions as 'political machines' can indeed function directly as patrons.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, clients are mostly presented as individuals in their relationships with patrons, but several studies have convincingly demonstrated that exchanges between a patron and a 'collective of

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<sup>20</sup>Although this section examines some of the literature relevant to clientelism in the Commonwealth Caribbean, the thesis' Conclusion provides a more comprehensive review as a part of a regional comparative analysis.

<sup>21</sup> For a sample of such conceptual discussions, see Chapman (1982: 4), (Lemarchand and Legg (1972: 151), Gay (1990a: 648), Chaves and Stoller (2002: 8), Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2002: 40), Stokes (2007: 604) and Part 1 of the edited volume by Hilgers (2012).

<sup>22</sup> For example, Hopkin (2006) and Kopecky, Scherlis, and Spirova (2007) have treated a political party as a 'collective patron' rather than the political actors who are part of it.

clients' in networks also classify as political clientelism. Some definitions correctly assume that resources and political support can also be in the form of promises. This is relevant because, apart from not always being verifiable, clientelist relationships operate over time<sup>23</sup> and can exist before and/or without the actual delivery of either resources or political support (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007: 7). It is largely for this reason that patrons eventually tend to establish, sometimes elaborate, mechanisms to monitor compliance of clientelist agreements. This element of 'promise' in the conceptualisation of political clientelism introduces three important assumptions for this thesis: political clientelism does not have to be legally proven to be denoted as such, it is not always possible to verify if promises are indeed kept (by clients and/or patrons) and the clientelist exchanges are not always immediate. Consequently, there is an element of unpredictability inherent to clientelist exchanges.

A significant definitional distinction relates to how the actual content of the clientelist exchange is conceived. With regard to what patrons provide or promise, some scholars emphasise certain types of resources of exchange over others—for example, individually targeted material inducements versus club goods,<sup>24</sup> or public versus private resources. However, apart from the fact that the exact types of resources exchanged are contextually determined, “what matters is not so much the content of the exchange, but the fact that the benefit must be divisible and targeted towards clients in order to gain their political allegiance” (Kopecky, Scherlis, and Spirova, 2007: 4). This element of resource divisibility is true both for the distribution of resources directly to individual clients, as well as for the division and distribution of resources to a collective of clients. An example of the latter is when incumbent politicians divide international development funds for road construction among a number of client groups based in particular communities in return for political support. In terms of private resources, if these enter government coffers (e.g., international grants) or are donations (e.g., campaign contributions) used by politicians to gain political support of clients for a public office, such exchanges are also

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<sup>23</sup> As Hicken (2011: 292) rightly noted, “clientelism is at its core an iterated interaction, with each side anticipating future interactions as they make decisions about their behaviour today.”

<sup>24</sup> The term 'club goods' refers to benefits that politicians distribute to certain sets of citizens and which are paid for by imposing costs on others (Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007: 11). An example is a food distribution programme for the urban poor paid for by a progressive tax.

classifiable as political clientelism. It is also important to acknowledge that the benefits provided can be more or less tangible. Sives (2002), for example, demonstrated how the comfort and personal security that derive from belonging to a clientelist political party can be in high demand in violence-ridden urban communities in Jamaica. In terms of what clients provide, some scholars, such as Stokes (2007), focus too narrowly on electoral support and voting, whereas others, such as Gay (1990a), envision a much broader set of support activities under the banner of 'political support'. This latter approach is preferred in that it allows for the exploration of political clientelism as an on-going political relationship that can include, but can also transcend, election campaigns. This approach also allows for the inclusion of state patronage (for example, to secure elite political support) even in states in which elections are suspended and/or rigged.<sup>25</sup>

A clear elitist bias can be detected in most conceptual approaches in that the clientelist relationship is generally presented from the point of view of politicians or political parties (patrons) who seek political advancement. Most studies of the exchange invariably assume a hierarchical arrangement in which the proactive patron is giving to the passive, exploited and dependent client. Auyero (1999, 2000, 2001) is prominent among the few scholars who have criticised this bias and argued for more research based on the viewpoints of clients and intermediaries. Auyero's own ethnographic research on Argentina illustrated that, from this analytical angle, clientelist relations can be construed as "constructive problem-solving networks meant to ensure material survival and of shared cultural representations" (2001: 14). This nuance is important because research that excludes or minimises either the viewpoint of patrons or of clients can overlook relevant manifestations and implications of clientelist politics,<sup>26</sup> as well as non-structural and more cultural dimensions of clientelism.

Because clientelist exchanges are not legally enforced and are theoretically breakable by either party at any time, they have been generally conceptualised

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<sup>25</sup> It is arguable, for example, that this (elections that were not free nor fair) was indeed the case in several military dictatorships in Latin America (for instance, Argentina and Guatemala) and even in a handful of Caribbean states (for instance, Guyana under Burnham).

<sup>26</sup> The term 'clientelist politics' refers to party-based political activities that fit the definition of political clientelism used in this thesis. The terms 'handout politics' (used in Belize) and 'benefits politics' (often used in Jamaica) are assumed to have similar meanings.



in the scholarship as voluntary (Clapham, 1982; Hilgers, 2011). The contestation that does exist around this issue is invariably around the degree of voluntarism inherent in the client's participation at the micro-political/dyadic level. As Hilgers (2011: 570) recounted, clients are, in theory, "free to choose their patrons and free to exit the relationship should it not be to their satisfaction." However, a number of studies have illustrated that clients, in contexts of economic inequity, are often exploited by patrons and can become dependent on the resources exchanged for support—to the extent that exiting the relationship can become difficult. For example, as Gay (1994, 1999) and Auyero (1999, 2000) have argued for clientelism in shantytowns in Brazil and Argentina, respectively, poor clients often feel compelled to remain in patron-client relationships for fear of losing needed benefits. Hilgers' (2011: 570) position on the issue of client voluntarism is sensible: "The degree of voluntarism is, thus, probably related directly to the size of the client's resource base or access to alternative patrons—that is, to his relative power vis-à-vis the patron."

Interestingly, there is much less focused academic discussion of voluntarism on the part of the political patron. This is likely because the clientelist motivation of patrons—who have access to resources needed by clients—is generally conceptualised as a deliberate, proactive and top-down strategy to enhance electability. As such, patrons, in theory, voluntarily choose to (or not to) give or promise clientelist inducements to an individual and so commence and/or continue a clientelist relationship. Yet several studies have shown that, once clientelism becomes established as a dominant political phenomenon and/or endemic to a political system, politicians and/or political parties may feel obligated to engage in clientelist activities. For example, it has been illustrated that opposition parties in Latin America and the Caribbean states with high incidences of poverty have opted to use clientelism as an electoral strategy to enhance competitiveness against incumbent clientelist parties.<sup>27</sup> It is likely, therefore, that, as with clients, voluntarism is a matter of degree for political patrons. In competitive party contexts, the degree of patron voluntarism is

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<sup>27</sup> For specific examples, see the discussion in the next sub-section on competitive political parties as a basic supporting condition for political clientelism.

probably directly related to the extent of inequality of access to resources and the extent of systemic entrenchment of clientelism. In short, although clientelist exchanges at the dyadic level are theoretically voluntary for both patrons and clients, they may be more or less so in practice.

This discussion raises the critical question as to whether political clientelism is a mode of political participation for clients. Based on the substantive conceptualisation of democracy adopted by this thesis, political participation is viewed as going beyond activities specific to voting to elect a small number of elite decision-makers.<sup>28</sup> Rather, the thesis conceives political participation more broadly as “behaviour influencing or attempting to influence the distribution of public goods” (Booth and Seligson, 1978: 6) and as inclusive of informal participation. Although informal political participation has been the subject of an increasing body of research since the 1990s, most studies focus on conventional modes, such as civil society advocacy, social movements and community organising.<sup>29</sup> Yet the literature on political participation has directed little attention to political clientelism as a mode of participation in its own right. In a comprehensive review of this literature, Van Deth (2001: 7) identified some 70 activities “that have been considered as forms of political participation in one or more studies,” but he did not include any activity related to political clientelism. Norris (2007: 643) correctly observed that a part of the reason is that political participation research still “continues to be focused primarily on traditional, conventional or civic forms of activism...by contrast, far less comparative research has examined alternative channels of political engagement, mobilisation and expression that are rapidly emerging in modern societies”. Verba and Nie (1972: 23) excluded political clientelism because of their criterion of limiting modes of participation to “legal and legitimate” activities—suggesting that some of the reluctance to view clientelism as participation also lies in its aforementioned negative and dubious reputation among scholars.

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<sup>28</sup> Verba and Nie (1972), Pateman (1970) and Milbrath and Goel (1982) are good examples of studies on political participation that employ such narrow electoral definitions of participation.

<sup>29</sup> For example, Gay (1990b), Levitsky and Helmke (2006), Avritzer (2002), Fox (2007) and Stokes (1995) are among scholars who have illustrated the importance and scope of informal participation in Latin America. As a specific instance, Avritzer (2002) argued for a less elitist and more inclusive notion of participation based on autonomous and collective citizen-organising in Latin America through such strategies as participatory budgeting.

Although sparse, the studies that do approach clientelism as a form of informal participation make convincing arguments. Most share the presumption that informal institutions and informal processes of participation characterise much of the de facto political experiences of many 'new' democracies, and that political clientelism is one of these. The works of Auyero (2000), Lauth (2000) and of Auyero, Lapegna and Poma (2009) are prominent examples. Key here is Lauth's (2000: 27) argument that "clientelist structures are based upon a relationship of exchange, which justifies our understanding of them as forms of participation, even when the personal connections are [or can be] asymmetrically structured." As such, political clientelism can be approached as an informal mode of political participation in that some citizens voluntarily, and even proactively, barter political support to political actors so as to influence the distribution of resources in their direction. By extension, and based on Helmke and Levitsky's (2004: 727) definition of informal institutions as those with "socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside of officially sanctioned channels", some forms of political clientelism can also be conceptualised as bona fide informal political institutions.

The decisions that citizens make on whether or not to participate in clientelist relationships are brought into sharper focus when approached from a 'rational-choice' theoretical approach.<sup>30</sup> In his discussion of political participation, for example, Chaffee (1979: 21) argued that citizens decide whether to engage in an activity "based on the benefit that personally accrues to them as compared to the costs of participation." From this conceptual angle, some potential clients decide to enter clientelist agreements only when the economic benefits of resources received or promised are assumed to out-weigh the costs of promising or providing political support.<sup>31</sup> Of course, one of the much-discussed practical flaws in this approach is that not all potential clients have equal access to the contextual information required to make such rational decisions. It has been argued, for example, that citizens who trade votes for benefits tend to be

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<sup>30</sup> Generally, rational choice theory holds that people choose to act based on assessments that their actions have more benefits than costs (e.g., Munck, 2002; J. Scott, 2000).

<sup>31</sup> Several scholars, such as Stokes and Medina (2002), Estevez and Magoloni (2002), Hopkin (2006), and Weitz (2007), have used aspects of a rational choice theory approach in their research on political clientelism.

those who are more politically involved and informed (Faughnan and Zechmeister, 2011: 3-4). Despite this crucial caveat, one key premise of this study is that, in the particular political and social contexts of some developing states, the individual decisions of citizens to engage in clientelist relationships to access needed resources can be highly rational indeed.

This introduces another key issue in the conceptual debate about political clientelism: the relative weight given to its distributive and/or re-distributive function. Several scholars have emphasised this element of resource distribution. For example, Gay (1990: 648) stated that political clientelism represents the “distribution of resources” by patrons in return for support; Stokes (2007: 604) referred to support being the “criterion for distribution.” In reference to the Commonwealth Caribbean, Domínguez observed that the clientelist practices of political parties are “inherently distributive, seeking to include, albeit with unequal gains, the many people needed to build support” (1993: 13). Political clientelism apart, a state generally has formal institutions and mechanisms in place to facilitate the allocation of public resources to citizens, including welfare programmes. Indeed, when these function effectively they should, in theory, lead to improvements in access to social and economic resources and thereby contribute to achieving social democracy. This is to say that resource distribution might be conceived as one of the means through which social democracy can be achieved. Indeed, much of both formal and informal political participation is about influencing how scarce resources are distributed, and political clientelism can be validly conceptualised as having an informal resource distributive function. Even if distribution or redistribution may not be a primary goal of political clientelism, it can be one possible outcome.

This summary discussion of the concept of political clientelism clarifies why specific definitions vary significantly in the scholarship. With the goal of allowing for inclusive and comprehensive analysis, this study adapts a fairly broad conceptualisation of political clientelism: an informal and dynamic political exchange between individual or collective clients, who provide or promise political support, and patrons, who provide or promise a variety of targeted and divisible resources and favours. This definition incorporates two sub-concepts

that have sometimes been erroneously used interchangeably with political clientelism: political patronage and vote trading. The term 'patronage' is used herein to denote those clientelist exchanges that are more directly related to the discretionary allocation of state resources, including public sector jobs.<sup>32</sup> 'Vote trading' is used as the term is employed by Schedler (2002: 3): the exchange of votes for resources, inclusive of 'vote buying' and 'vote selling'. Overall, the key definitional thread is that if resources are distributed, offered, requested or received by individuals or groups with the clear primary intent of exchange for specific types of political support, the activity is classifiable as political clientelism. Implicit to the definition are the assumptions that political clientelism can transcend voting, can take both legitimate and unlawful forms, and can be justifiably explored as both a form of informal participation and mode of resource distribution.

### ***Basic and Supporting Conditions for Political Clientelism***

How does political clientelism develop, and what conditions make it thrive in a 'new' democracy? Many of the thematic and area studies in the scholarship on political clientelism are directed at answering these questions. Clapham's (1980: 7-8) identification of necessary conditions for political clientelism in a state provides a useful organisational foundation for a review: resources are controlled by one particular group, patrons desire what clients can provide, clients do not have access to resources that patrons control and public allocation of resources is ineffective. Although stated too absolutely, one or more of these conditions is identifiable in most of the recent political clientelism literature specific to transitions to democracy. A review of the conceptual elements of this literature shows that the key variable that is missing in Clapham's list of conditions is competitive party politics. With this crucial refinement, the following discussion of the relevant literature on the basic and supporting conditions (i.e., independent variables) of political clientelism is organised around three broad thematic categories: poverty and inequality, control of political and resource allocation institutions, and the emergence and consolidation of competitive party politics. Additionally, the section summarises

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<sup>32</sup> It is also important to note that 'patronage' can include legally prescribed appointments (such as those to boards of statutory bodies) that characterise changes of governments in some political systems.

the literature on other country-contextual variables that are assumed to be relevant for the Belize case. The relevant premise here is that the extent, unique contextual mix and manifestations of these variables determine the nature and incidence of political clientelism in a particular state.

### **Poverty and Inequality**

Differential access to resources between patrons and clients is universally accepted as a basic and necessary supporting condition for all clientelism, including political clientelism. Consequently, it is not surprising that poverty and inequality are treated as conditions that have a strong and direct supportive relationship to the prevalence of political clientelism in emerging democracies. The core argument is decidedly rational in nature: poverty and unequal or ineffective resource distribution make political clientelism more attractive to both clients, who need resources, and to patrons, who find 'buying' political support cost-effective as part of their electoral strategies.<sup>33</sup> Not surprisingly, the AmericasBarometer survey (2011: 1) on vote buying in the Americas reported that "the results affirm the importance of individual-level poverty and, as well, country-level income inequality in predicting offers of vote buying." Moreover, ineffective or inadequate alternatives to address poverty (such as state welfare institutions and civil society interventions) facilitate political clientelism. The majority of studies direct research attention exclusively on the poor within states as clients by exploring different thematic and country-specific aspects of this poverty/clientelism relationship.<sup>34</sup> With regard to the extent of poverty, for example, Keefer (2007: 804) argued that in some contexts of high incidences of poverty in young democracies, "The inability of political competitors to make credible promises to citizens, leads them to prefer clientelist policies...to under-provide non-targeted goods, to over-provide targeted transfers to narrow groups of voters."

From the viewpoint of clients, Auyero (2000) presented political clientelism as the 'politics of the poor' to emphasise how the poor in urban communities in Argentina proactively use their political support to access needed resources.

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<sup>33</sup> These arguments, for example, are made strongly in the works of Estevez, Magaloni and Diaz-Cayeros (2002) for Mexico, Weitz-Shapiro (2007) for Argentina and Markussen (2011) for (South) India.

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, the studies of Gay (1990), Auyero (1999 2000), Stokes (2007) and Keefer (2007).

Other studies relate poverty and clientelism to other independent variables. For example, Weitz-Shapiro (2007: 1-2), in a quantitative study of clientelism, poverty and opposition party size across 120 cities in Argentina, found that cities with high poverty incidences exhibit little change in the prevalence of clientelism when opposition parties are stronger, but that effective opposition decreases clientelism where poverty is low. However, some studies indicate that there may not always be a direct relationship between incidences of poverty and political clientelism. For example, Estevez and Magoloni's (2002: 2) empirical study of party-based clientelism in México concluded that "only under exceptional conditions of extreme poverty and very low political competition are votes bought through clientelism cheap enough to ensure election victory" and that to win elections parties need also to expand "universalistic allocations".

There is also the converse implication of the poverty/clientelism relationship: decreases in poverty and a more equitable distribution of wealth should theoretically contribute to dampening clientelist behaviour. As Stone (1980: 102) suggested, political clientelism is usually more "muted and restrained by contrary forces" in richer and more developed states. In this regard, for example, Stokes and Medina (2002: 17-18) used a quantitative model of electoral competition (in Latin America) to illustrate that economic development and improvements in the distribution of non-targeted resources "undermine[s] the incumbent patron's advantage over any challenger" and can diminish clientelism. However, several scholars, including Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007: 41), have demonstrated that political clientelism can persist in developed states with low levels of poverty and high levels of economic development, such as Japan and Italy. Moreover, there can be distinctions even within developing states. Some studies have found that, in some social contexts, middle-income citizens can also become clients. Domínguez (1993: 13), for instance, noted that "patronage did not just benefit the poor" but that elements of the middle and business classes are also clients in Commonwealth Caribbean states. Other scholars, such as Schedler (2002: 32), actually argued that, in certain countries (such as México) people in poor communities can hold strong anti-clientelist tendencies. These studies imply that, in practice, the extent to which poverty and inequality are relevant depends not only on their particular manifestations,

but also on their interplay with other basic conditions and supporting variables in a particular country context.

### **Control of Public Institutions by Local Leaders**

The conceptual logic behind control over resource allocation institutions as a basic condition for political clientelism is straightforward in the scholarship: newly democratised polities are generally more conducive to clientelist behaviour when political leaders have dominant control over institutions of state that can disburse goods and services as favours.<sup>35</sup> Simply put, when such political control is high, more discretionary and subject to low levels of accountability, opportunities for clientelist exchanges are maximised. Importantly, as Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007: 28) argued, the level of institutional control needs to be such that enough politicians and citizens alike believe that keeping or changing of a candidate or party has the potential to directly benefit favoured individuals and groups.

The extent of political control over resource allocation that obtains in a particular state can be examined at various organisational levels, including the macro-political system itself. It is well established that political clientelism can be equally prevalent in states with quite different systems of governance (for example, presidential or parliamentary). Yet, because some scholars argue that Westminster's parliamentary model allows for faster policy decision-making, fewer legislative bottlenecks and generally stronger governments than presidential systems (e.g., Lijphart, 1992, 1999; Ryan, 1999), it is useful to explore whether these characteristics can facilitate political clientelism. Additionally, the extent of control exercised over electoral management and regulatory institutions by incumbents are also relevant to the prevalence of clientelism. As Stokes (2007: 619) argued, it is de facto practices of electoral institutions in any system that may "encourage the personal vote...and also clientelism." The pertinent point here is that, although most electoral systems in young democracies do have legal institutions and procedures to ban or discourage the bribery of voters, these rules are often ignored by government officials, political parties and voters.

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<sup>35</sup> See, for example, Clapham (1982: 7-8) and Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007: 36-42).



Not surprisingly then, the formal institutions of resource allocation have also been subjects of research in political clientelism studies. These include the key social sector ministries and institutions of government that distribute public funds to citizens, as well as quasi-governmental schemes and internationally funded programmes managed by the state. Generally, these studies have focused on how incumbent politicians manipulate such public sector interventions to distribute resources to targeted citizens and groups. For example, Stokes and Medina (2002), in a quantitative study of clientelism (in Argentina) as a 'political monopoly' of patrons who control resource allocation, concluded that such monopoly situations are favourable to incumbent parties in that they diminish the capacity of opposition parties to compete. As such, incumbents have little incentive to distribute resources universally through formal institutions based on fair need-based criteria.

Robinson and Verdier (2003) used a political economy modelling approach to theorise clientelism from the viewpoint of the redistribution of public sector jobs by politicians in government. They argued (2003: 1) that "inefficient redistribution and clientelism become a relatively attractive political strategy in situations with high inequality and low productivity" and that "inefficiency is increased when the 'stakes' from politics are high, inequality is high, and when money matters more than ideology in politics." Garriga (2006: 32), using the case of an Argentinean unemployment assistance programme, found that "political alignment between local governors and the national government is the most significant determinant" for national distribution of resources, and that the "national government seems to use social spending as an attempt to co-opt poor people only in districts that share its political party ID."

### **Competitive Party Politics**

Because patrons are almost always political party actors, the majority of studies of political clientelism in new democracies have employed a political party institutional framework and placed much research emphasis on the role of multi-party competition.<sup>36</sup> This thesis takes the view that a party system can be

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<sup>36</sup> Examples of such studies include those by Estevez and Magoloni (2002), Wuhs (2008), Stokes and Dunning (2008) and Schedler (2002).

described as 'competitive' when partisans "have strong incentives to try to win supporters at the margin for one or the other partisan camp" and that a key indicator of such competition is when elections are close between partisan blocs (Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2007: 28). As they (2007: 7-11) summarised, party-citizen relationships in a context of competition can take variants of two broad forms at different points in time: programmatic or clientelist. Generally, programmatic relationships are characterised by the dominant distribution of non-targeted and non-contingent resources through public institutions, and are normally more ideological in orientation. On the other hand, clientelist party-citizen relationships generally feature distribution of targeted and contingent resources. Both forms can exist simultaneously, and both require the establishment of party machines to organise voter support. Importantly, because particular contextual conditions contribute to determining the degree of prevalence of either relationship, both can be approached analytically as being potentially path dependent.

It is often within a path dependent analytical framework that many studies attribute the prevalence of political clientelism to intense competitive party politics. In the case of Latin America, for example, Schedler (2002: 3) related the expansion and persistence of political clientelism directly to the rise of "competitive electoral politics" in the context of the consolidation of formal democracy. The usual narrative is that of smaller or weaker political parties, which have usually never been in power, adopting the clientelist 'machine party' tactics of the larger and better-established parties, with the goal of becoming more competitive and of controlling the powers of government. For example, Wuhs (2008), writing on party politics in México, argued that in the process of transforming the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) and the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) to compete with the ruling Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), the PAN and PRD developed less participatory internal party practices, which mirrored some of the well-known clientelist practices of the PRI.

A similar trend is observable in the historical development of party politics in the Commonwealth Caribbean. For example, Huber-Stephens and Stephens (1987)

and Payne (1988), using the case of Jamaica, have illustrated how the rise of party politics in the decolonisation period and after independence was generally characterised by increasingly divisive competitive politics as opposition parties plotted to unseat the original parties of the nationalist movement. Stone (1980), Edie (1991) and Sives (2010) have linked the emergence of political clientelism in Jamaica directly to the emergence of competitive party politics. Overall, much of the literature approaches political clientelism as a generic party-based political strategy that is utilised by competing politicians with the objective of enhancing the predictability of electoral performance.

A fairly large sub-set of studies on party-based clientelism<sup>37</sup> has focused on the strategies that political parties utilise to ensure they remain competitive once political clientelism is established as a dominant activity. Stokes (2007: 611) noted that “rather than using public policy to effect transfers from some classes of voters to others, parties deliver inducements to individual voters and thus bolster the parties’ electoral prospects.” Using survey research methodology to examine which voters political parties (in Argentina) tend to target, Stokes and Dunning (2008: 2) found that “among voters who are likely to vote without an extra side payment, they target voters who, on ideological grounds, will tend to side with opposing parties,” but “among those who need an additional incentive to turn out to vote [clientelism], they target their own partisans.”

A smaller, but important, set of studies has approached the political party variable from the point of view of decisions made by clients to engage in clientelist relationships with political candidates. For example, Hopkin (2006: 3), while acknowledging that “there remains an imbalance of power, in that the [political party] has control over resources that the client needs,” contended that this relationship can be “less hierarchical” and “there [can be] less of a sense of deference and dependency on the part of the client, who feels increasingly free to use her vote as a commodity to be exchanged for whatever maximizes her utility.” In short, clients also have political power in negotiating the individual and collective value of their votes.

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<sup>37</sup> The term ‘party-based clientelism’ is used, herein, to describe the use of clientelist strategies by political parties and their politicians.

Even though intense party competition and political clientelism are not specific to particular systems of governance or electoral models, it has been argued that Westminster's FPTP electoral system, in which two or more politicians compete for the same voters in the same constituency, can be more conducive to two-party competitive clientelist practices by politicians than those in proportional representative systems, in which there are no single-seat constituencies (Menocal, 2009: 12-14). As Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007: 42) suggested, the attraction of clientelism is even higher in electoral systems that are more 'personalist'. Highly familiar politician-citizen relationships in FPTP electoral systems, particularly in small state contexts, are likely conducive to the expansion of clientelism.

### ***Country-specific Variables***

Apart from the three basic supporting conditions discussed above, other more country-specific conditions have also been employed to explore political clientelism. These are important because they contribute to determining the unique manifestations and implications of political clientelism in a particular state. Some of the literature related to alternative modes of participation, small-state size, ethnicity and gender is particularly relevant to the study of clientelism in Belize.

### **Alternative Modes of Participation**

A sub-set of studies has examined the prevalence of political clientelism in relation to alternative and informal forms of political participation, including civil society groups, community-organising and social movements. In particular, there is a substantive research focus on the role of civil society organisations as alternative modes of participation through which citizens can influence public policy and resource allocation. Roniger and Gunes-Ayata (1994), Roniger (1994) and Whitehead (2002) are among those who have associated the persistence of political clientelism with weak civil societies. The general premise is that political clientelism is more widespread in situations where participation in more respectable informal alternatives is either not readily available, or is not sufficiently effective in providing needed resources. However, other studies have correctly pointed to a more complicated link.

For example, Weitz (2007: 26) found that “there appears to be no relationship between levels of civil society organisation and the propensity to use clientelism” in the context of Argentina. Fox (1994: 161), in his study of civil society movements in México, found that while clientelism continued and new forms of “semi-clientelism” developed, “autonomous organizations of civil society” can also “broaden and deepen” at the same time, albeit in an uneven process. Auyero, Lapegna and Poma (2009: 1) went further and challenged the conventional wisdom of political clientelism and collective action as “contradictory processes and examine them as distinct, but sometimes overlapping, strategies for solving pressing survival problems and addressing grievances.”

Reid (2008: 12), in a study on the Philippines, put an additional and intriguing twist on the relationship between civil society and political clientelism when he argued that “far from being a conditioning force on the state, civil society is itself a sphere where clientelism and semi-clientelism predominate...so powerful are these forces, that arguably well-intentioned NGO personnel who previously adopted a critical stance toward neo-clientelism ultimately become absorbed by these relationships.” The extent that this is true for, or even perceived in, particular states can have serious repercussions for the credibility of civil society organisations as effective alternative modes of participation to influence resource allocation.

These civil society studies reiterate the view that the democratic transition process is much more complicated than some earlier studies indicated, and that alternative modes of citizen participation can grow alongside, and even compete with, political clientelism. They also suggest that the relationship of political clientelism to civil society organising is likely dependent not only on the density of civil society, but also on thematic focus of programmes, geographical scope of work and the societal context of the particular state being studied. Belize’s recent experience of an active civil society sector suggests that these relationships are relevant to explore.

## State Scale

Belize's territorial size of 22,966 square kilometres and 2010 population of 312,698 suggested that state scale would be a relevant factor for the case study.<sup>38</sup> State scale and population size have received only limited scholarly attention in political clientelism studies. Although Sutton (2001: 76) was right to note that "there is no agreed definition of a small state among nations or international organisations," the Commonwealth Secretariat (which has been an international leader in promoting small-state studies) has defined small states as those with a population of less than 1.5 million.<sup>39</sup> Much of the literature is dominated by analyses of the challenges and vulnerabilities presented by small states (e.g., Briguglio, Cordina, Farrugia, and Vigilance, 2008). For example, the Commonwealth Secretariat has stated that small states "possess unique special development challenges: limited diversification, limited capacity, poverty, susceptibility to natural disasters and environmental change, remoteness and isolation, openness, and income volatility".<sup>40</sup> A related assumption is that small size can result in the disproportionate manifestations of both negative and positive impacts of most political, economic and natural phenomena.<sup>41</sup>

Although little studied, some insights into the political clientelism/small-state relationship can be derived from observing the impact of small size on other political phenomena. For example, political parties in smaller states generally find it less challenging to inform and mobilise people, given the smaller populations and geographical spaces. Small states have also been described as being "among the more democratic of developing states" (Sutton, 2001: 85). Dahl and Tufte (1974); Stepan and Skach (1993); and Clague, Gleason, and Knack (2001) also found positive correlations between formal democracy, on the one hand, and small-state size, on the other.<sup>42</sup> However, what is likely most

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<sup>38</sup> Belize's territorial size is second to Guyana in the Commonwealth Caribbean and just marginally larger than El Salvador in Central America. Its 2010 population is the smallest in Central America, but larger than all Commonwealth Caribbean states, except Jamaica, Guyana, the Bahamas and Trinidad and Tobago.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.thecommonwealth.org/Internal/180407/>. The fact that Jamaica (with a population of 2.6 million) is considered a small state illustrates the definitional challenges.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Lee and Smith (2010: 1091) have challenged this 'vulnerabilities' approach (i.e., small size as a problem to be solved) and urged that more conceptual focus be placed on reacting to "unequal power structures" that exist in spite of small state scale.

<sup>42</sup> See also, Stone (1980) and Bishop (2011) for discussions on the issue of small-size in Caribbean politics.

relevant is that small states generally allow, more than larger states, for a type of highly personalised politics that is very conducive to the fostering of dyadic clientelist relationships (Duncan and Woods, 2007: 203). Additionally, as Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007: 15) suggested, the attraction of clientelism is greatest in electoral systems that are more familiar, in part, because monitoring of clients' compliance with clientelist agreements is more cost-effective "where the numbers of voters is small—hundreds or thousands rather than tens of thousands."

### **Ethnicity**

Belize's diverse multi-ethnicity also implied that a review of the scholarship on ethnicity and clientelism would be important for the case study. As Premdas (2001: 26) noted, "Ethnic identity emerges from collective group consciousness that imparts a sense of belonging derived from membership in a community bound putatively by common descent and culture. As a subjective phenomenon, it imparts to the individual, a sense of belonging and to the community a sense of solidarity."<sup>43</sup> As such, it is an identifying feature of a population that can be used by both patrons and clients in the negotiation of clientelist exchanges.

The relationship between ethnicity and political clientelism has been the subject of a few studies. A central theme is that multi-ethnic societies provide patrons with an already existent structural network upon which to build clientelist networks. For instance, in their research on clientelism and resource allocation, Stokes and Medina (2002: 17-18) found that ethnicity was a key factor in distribution decisions, and that "ethnically divided societies may be more prone to clientelism than are ethnically homogeneous ones." Chandra (2002: 2-3) examined the relationship between high levels of political clientelism and ethnic favouritism in a 'patronage democracy' (India) and found that ethnic similarity facilitates clientelist exchanges.

Several studies have examined the issue of ethnicity and clientelism in Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana, both of which have experiences with ethnically divisive party politics. For example, Premdas (2007) explored, among other things, ethnic inequalities in Trinidad and Tobago's public service and found

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<sup>43</sup> See Premdas (1998) for a comprehensive discussion of ethnicity and culture in the Caribbean.

that, because political parties in Trinidad and Tobago are ethnically identified, parties in power tend towards distributing a large portion of public service jobs and public services by ethnic criteria.<sup>44</sup>

### **Gender**

Gender has received negligible consideration in the political clientelism literature. However, recent studies exploring political institutions and social welfare programmes from a gender perspective provide some useful insights. As Krook and Mackay (2011: 6) noted, “To say an institution is gendered means that constructs of masculinity and femininity are intertwined in the daily culture and logic of political institutions, rather than their existence out in society.”

A number of studies have explored these gender constructs in the context of informal institutions. For example, Mackay, Kenny and Chappell (2010: 583) highlighted country studies that show that “male-dominated political elites have shifted the locus of power from formal to informal mechanisms in order to counteract women’s increased access and presence in formal decision-making.” In her studies on male dominance in informal political institutions (in Thailand) Bjarnegård (2010, 2013) is convincing in her demonstration that clientelism is also gendered, and leadership roles (patrons and brokers) are even more dominated by men than is the case in formal political institutions. She argued (2010: 170-174) that the under representation of women in the highest hierarchical levels of clientelist networks translates into under representation in parliament because it is through these networks that candidate recruitment and selection most transpire. Although men dominate the leadership roles of clientelist network in most contexts, several studies indicate that women often participate more in the lowest hierarchical level as clients (Lewis, 2012).

Issues related to gender and clientelism have been highlighted in several assessments of conditional cash transfer (CCT) programmes, especially in Latin America.<sup>45</sup> Within the broad goal of poverty alleviation, CCTs have targeted

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<sup>44</sup> Other such studies on ethnicity and clientelism in the Commonwealth Caribbean are discussed as relevant in the Conclusion.

<sup>45</sup> CCTs generally provide cash transfers to poor citizens based on compliance with specified educational and health responsibilities. A CCT programme was launched in Belize in 2010.



women predominately and are highly susceptible to politicisation and clientelist politics.<sup>46</sup> In a study on CCTs in Argentina, for example, findings “suggest that women regularly found themselves in a subservient role to men with more power, resources and social status in the client–patron relationship” and that “the CCT may be transforming the traditional patron–client relations into genderised relations of domination” (Gruenberg, 2011: 1-2). Gender-related abuses with regard to clientelism recorded in CCT programmes in Latin America have included extortion of CCT monies by patrons, requirements to participate in party events and even sexual violence (Iraola and Gruenberg, 2008: 8-10). Clearly, the gender dimensions of political clientelism are important to explore.

### ***On the Implications of Political Clientelism for New Democracies***

As Eisenstadt and Roniger (1980: 49) contended, the “full institutional implications and repercussions [of political clientelism] are only seen when they become a part or manifestation of the central mode of regulation of resources...and are best understood in relation to the broader, often macro-societal, setting in which they take place.” Yet comprehensive research on the macro-political and governance consequences for new democracies is sparse.<sup>47</sup> Most studies focus exclusively on particular consequences for individuals, small communities or political parties. Those that explore wider political and systemic consequences, if not purely heuristic, do so largely from narrow analytical viewpoints.<sup>48</sup> This is due in no small part to the complex analytical challenge of inferring national political implications of relationships that are mostly dyadic, informal or even illegal in nature.

The vast majority of studies focus on the negative implications of political clientelism. For example, Goetz’s (2007: 404) cross-national study found that governance reforms “often fail because they tend to threaten existing power relations: the patronage systems through which political advantage is

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<sup>46</sup> See, for example, assessments by Carillo and Gruenberg (2006), Molyneau (2010) and Iraola and Gruenberg (2008).

<sup>47</sup> See Stokes (2007: 621) for a good summary discussion of this bias in the literature on political clientelism.

<sup>48</sup> The research focus tends to be on elections or on the allocation of public resources. For example, Garriga (2006) examined consequences for social spending in Argentina, and Robinson and Verdier (2003) explored consequences for public sector jobs in a cross-national study.

maintained, and the patterns of collusion through which public resources are diverted to favoured groups.” Politicians therefore weigh reform measures by the “risk that they will lose patronage resources (public sector jobs and rents), and also lose popular support” (Goetz, 2007: 404). Seen from this perspective, political clientelism is a disincentive to long-term policy development as well as to governance reforms, which may take away loop-holes and threaten the allocation of resources through clientelist networks. As such, pervasive clientelism can encourage short-term fixes and risky decisions based more on the demands of election cycles and patron-client relationships than on the national and collective good of states.

Some studies have also demonstrated that political clientelism, in some contexts, can contribute to both division and violence in communities in which it is entrenched. For example, Sives (1998, 2002), Figueroa and Sives (2003), Gray (2003, 2004), Charles (2004) and Clarke (2006) have examined political clientelism as a primary cause of the highly divisive and violent nature of constituency-based politics in Jamaica. In particular, Sives (2002) has demonstrated how politicians’ use of drug dons as a source of clientelist resources has resulted in a situation in which some drug dons themselves have become patrons in several Kingston constituencies.

Not surprisingly, the relationship between political clientelism and public corruption<sup>49</sup> receives much attention in the literature. Hutchcroft (1997: 645) examined the relationship between clientelism, rent-seeking and corruption, on the one hand, and economic development, on the other, and demonstrated that clientelism overlaps with corruption when patrons use public office, or access to office holders, to direct state resources and services to themselves, clients and party financiers. Similarly, Rehren (2009: 50) noted that “when political parties control the bureaucracy and behave as virtual patrons, dispensing public resources and positions in exchange for partisan allegiance, and eventually allow party members to enrich themselves, clientelism facilitates corruption.” In a study on why corrupt governments maintain public support, Manzetti and Wilson (2009: 77-78) presented sobering findings from a cross-national analysis

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<sup>49</sup> Political corruption is herein defined generally as the abuse of public norms, laws and/or resources for private gain.

of citizens in 14 states. They found that “people in countries where government institutions are weak and patron-client relations are strong are more likely to support a corrupt leader from whom they expect to receive tangible benefits.” They additionally contended that such public support is more likely in states that exhibit higher levels of poverty and inequality. Generally, these studies highlight the reality of the very thin and grey line between political clientelism and corruption and how they can ‘feed’ each other in practice.

However, some studies point to possible positive effects for both clients and the macro-political system. Two broad categories of benefits can be observed in the literature, namely (re)distributive benefits and the enhancement of the political engagement of clients. In the first category, several studies have highlighted how poor people and poor communities, especially in a context of socio-economic inequality, receive needed goods and services that may not have been otherwise available to them. For example, Auyero (1999, and 2000), Lazar (2004) and Hopkin (2006) all argued that political clientelism can also have positive benefits for poor clients and communities. Stokes (2007: 619) provided a different view on the implications of political clientelism for poverty with the observation that, while “it may be true that poverty causes clientelism,” some argue that “clientelism causes poverty.” This latter relationship can transpire in cases where political clientelism creates socio-economic dependency and becomes a disincentive to alternative modes of income generation and to formal and above-board modes of resource allocation.

In regard to enhancing citizen participation, Lazar (2004: 228), in an ethnographic study of clientelism in a poor Bolivian municipality, illustrated that clientelism is a way “through which citizens attempt to make politics, and politicians, more representative and responsive.” As Auyero (2000, 2001) argued repeatedly, in the context of structural poverty, clients can construe the clientelist relationship as a realistic problem-solving strategy—which, for some, may be the only or primary means of communicating basic needs to political leaders. It is largely because of these redistributive and problem-solving arguments that some contend that political clientelism may even help to

preserve democracy and social stability in young democracies (e.g., Edie, 1991: 7; Domínguez, 1993: 13; Duncan and Woods, 2007: 203).

The political condition of the existence of high and pervasive levels of clientelism alongside formal democracy in young democracies led Stone (1980: 93) to coin the seemingly oxymoronic term 'clientelist democracy' for Jamaica. It is near identical in usage to the concept of 'patronage democracy' developed later by Chandra (2002: 3) to depict a formal democracy in which clientelism is systemic and elected officials enjoy "significant discretion in the implementation of laws allocating jobs and services" and the public sector is a major "source of jobs and provider of services in comparison to the private sector." However contradictory the terms 'clientelistic democracy' and 'patronage democracy' may appear, they acknowledge the (sometimes discounted) reality that developing states can exhibit some features of formal democracy, but simultaneously have significant levels of political clientelism and limited development of the more substantive features of democracy.

This discussion of the research on the possible implications of political clientelism suggests that analysts need to be cognizant of possible negative as well as positive effects and be cautious in making unsubstantiated value judgements about political clientelism itself. There is merit to Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith's (2002: 9) argument that practices related to political clientelism may best be seen as "neither good nor bad in themselves...what matters are the outcomes, and those are varied."

## **Analytical Approach and Research Methodology**

### ***A Summary of the Analytical Framework***

Kaufman's (1974: 287) identification of the three analytical challenges facing the study of political clientelism is still highly relevant: what level of analysis is to be employed in a polity, how to differentiate between activities related to clientelism and other types of political relationships, and how to avoid exaggerating the explanatory role of clientelism in relation to these. The preceding presentation of the political clientelism puzzle for Belize, the definition selected and the review of the relevant scholarship outlined a clear direction for developing an

analytical framework that addresses these challenges. Based on the study's research questions, this framework allows for examination of the dyadic and particularistic relationships that comprise political clientelism, of its macro-political and institutional dimensions, of its causes and of its implications in the Belize context, as well as for selective comparative analysis within the Commonwealth Caribbean. The framework employed has facilitated examination of the features and inter-relationships of both the particularistic exchanges and the macro-institutional dimensions of political clientelism in Belize, and is akin to what Roniger (1994: 12) denoted a "multidimensional approach that transcends structural and functional analysis by also taking into consideration the modus operandi and transactional operations that are also important in clientelism".

At the macro-analytical level, the thesis approaches political clientelism (the central dependent variable) as an informal mode of political participation and resource distribution, within the broader conceptual framework of democracy and democratisation. The analytical framework assumes that conditions in Belize's macro-political context can be causal factors that contribute to the extent and nature of clientelist behaviour, as well as possible consequences of such behaviour, and that the consequences can have other, even multiple, causes apart from clientelism. As such, it is essential to untangle causes and consequences so as to avoid 'causal dilemma'<sup>50</sup> and what Kaufman (1974: 295) referred to as "stretch[ing] the patron-client concept." Based on insights from the literature review this thesis has prioritised six independent variables for focused research and analysis. Four of these variables are approached as universally accepted basic supporting conditions for clientelism and two are approached as more specific to the Belize context. It was assumed that gender is a 'thread issue' for all these variables and that other issues would arise from the research.

Competitive party politics was assumed to be a key cause of Belize's expansion and entrenchment of political clientelism. Existing constraints in key public institutions (and the further politicised control of these within the ambit of the

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<sup>50</sup> This is simply to say that the line between causes and consequences can be blurred and/or can have 'chicken-egg' dimensions.

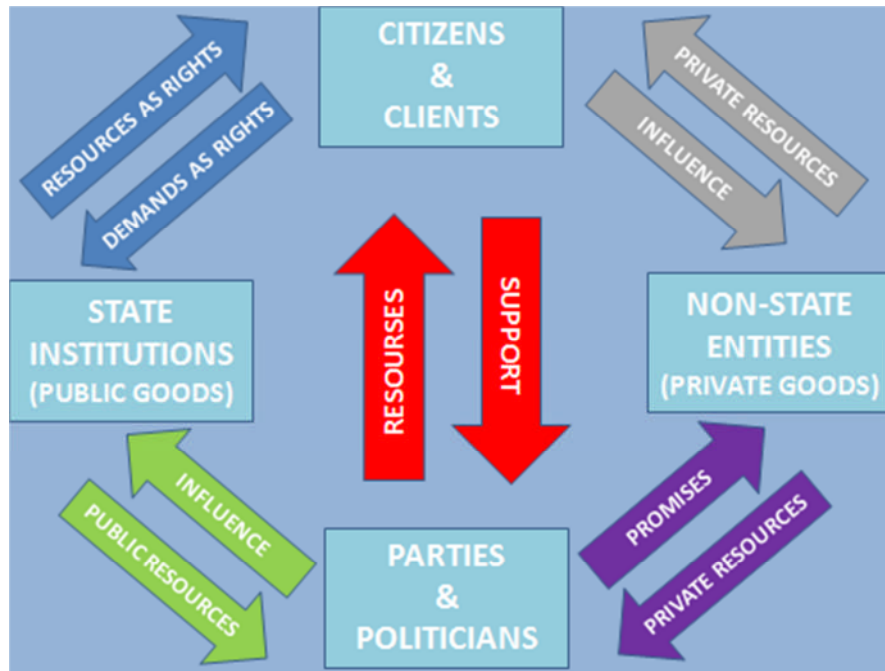
Westminster model) were assumed to have facilitated the expansion of clientelism significantly. Moreover, a key premise was that the increases in poverty and inequality, and ineffective responses to these challenges since independence have also been significant contributing factors. As such, the four basic supporting conditions selected were (i) the degree and nature of competitive party politics, (ii) the extent of centralised and politicised control of resource allocation institutions (iii) the extent and nature of poverty and inequality, and (iv) the relative effectiveness of formal and informal alternatives to clientelist influence and distribution.

Even though the Belize context determines the exact nature and manifestations of these four basic factors, the thesis identified two Belize-specific contextual variables: (i) multi-ethnicity and (ii) small-state size. It is hypothesised that Belize's diverse multi-ethnicity, which has been changing (due, in part, to migratory movements) may have contributed to determining the particular nature and manifestations of political clientelism. It was also assumed that Belize's small size has likely facilitated the expansion and entrenchment of political clientelism by increasing the propensity for personality-based and particularistic politics.

Although the examination of the implications of clientelism for the quality of democracy in Belize was expected to flow from exploration of the abovementioned independent variables, the literature review points to priority areas around which to focus this aspect of the research. These include the consequences for (i) formal public and political institutions, (ii) policy development and reform, (iii) political corruption, (iv) formal and informal political participation and (v) resource distribution. To allow for comprehensive analysis of these supporting variables and possible implications, the thesis' analytical framework allows for examination of various levels of relationships between and among a variety of political actors within Belize: citizen-politician relationships, clientelist network relationships, political party relationships and relationships within the wider macro-political system. The possible interactions between and among the various actors (citizens, politicians, political parties, government, private donors and civil society groups) are depicted in a basic

influence and resource flow diagram (Figure 2) to further clarify the analytical framework. The diagram does not aspire to illustrate every possible relationship, but to illustrate the key relationships and to help frame examination of the expansion of clientelist flows and how this relates to the other flows depicted.

**FIGURE 2**  
**Influence and Resource Flows among Political Actors**



Source: Designed by the author.

In broad terms, and within the wider context of representative democracy, the blue arrows represent formal, and largely programmatic, influence and resource flows between citizens and the government. The red arrows depict informal, and largely targeted, clientelist exchanges between citizens and politicians. The green arrows illustrate the formal and informal influence and resource flows that can occur between politicians and political parties, on the one hand, and the government, on the other. The purple arrows depict influence and resource flows between politicians and parties, on the one hand, and private individuals and institutions (including financial donors), on the other. The grey arrows represent the possible influence and resource flows between citizens and non-state entities such as civil society and business organisations. Although these various influence and resource flows take place in almost every country with formal democracy and competitive party politics, the key point here is that each

of these flows can be more or less dominant in any state and can change over time.

In terms of time period selected for study, the thesis focuses on political clientelism since Belize became a fully independent state in September 1981, up until the end of 2011—just nine weeks before the general election of March 2012. However, to address the first research question on the emergence of political clientelism, it is necessary to examine relevant aspects of Belize’s pre-independence political experience to establish both the background political context as well as a 1980/1981 ‘baseline’ from which to map the post-independence expansion of political clientelism. With 1980/1981 established as the baseline year to explore the post-independence expansion and manifestations of political clientelism, nine tracer markers (listed in Table 1) are employed to facilitate a comparison to changes that had occurred by the end of 2011.

**TABLE 1**  
**Tracer Markers to Track Changes in Clientelism**  
**between 1980/1981 and 2011**

| #  | TRACER MARKERS  |
|----|---|
| 1. | Numbers and geographical spread of political clinics <sup>51</sup>        |
| 2. | Numbers and profiles of clients   |
| 3. | Types and volume of goods and services going to clients                   |
| 4. | Monetary value of goods and services going to clients                     |
| 5. | Types of political support going to patrons                               |
| 6. | Extent of distribution of public resources for party/clientelist purposes |
| 7. | Ratio of permanent/temporary public service jobs <sup>52</sup>            |
| 8. | Extent of references to clientelism in news stories and public documents  |
| 9. | Number of alleged cases of voter bribery taken to court                   |

One other tracer that was considered but not employed for the study is that of changes in ‘off budget’ government expenditures—which are assumed to be a source of funding for clientelist activities. Because they are ‘off budget’ and often unaudited, these expenditures are very difficult to track in a manner that

<sup>51</sup> In the Belize context, a ‘political clinic’ is the node of clientelist operations at the constituency level, where constituents can visit with representatives and candidates.

<sup>52</sup> Since independence, governments have used a provision in the public service regulations to expand the hiring of ‘open vote’ public officers i.e., a category of short-term/temporary contract officers. Hiring is done by ministerial discretion and not through the established procedures for hiring permanent staff (Interview with Charles Gibson, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Ministry of the Public Service, 21 December 2010).



allows for effective comparison over time. Instead, the broader tracer of the 'extent of distribution of public resources for party/clientelist purposes' is employed and, in some cases, may capture some of the 'off-budget' expenditures.

This multi-dimensional and integrated analytical approach is necessary because the thesis seeks to avoid the limitations of many studies of political clientelism that focus on a single independent variable or that give little attention to its macro-political dimensions. However, the study is based on the understanding that Belize's small size and compact 30-year experience as an independent democratic state facilitate both micro-analysis and macro-analysis of the development of political clientelism and its implications for the quality of democracy.

For the fourth research question on Commonwealth Caribbean comparative analysis, a regional thematic analytical approach was selected after considering a two-country comparative approach. Resource constraints precluded dedicated primary research outside of Belize and there was neither sufficient, nor up-to-date, material available to inform direct comparisons with another specific state in the region. This focus on the independent Commonwealth Caribbean does not deny that insightful comparisons could be made with other countries within or outside the region.<sup>53</sup> However, the selected comparison is a constructive and, perhaps, necessary prerequisite to engaging in cross-regional comparisons with states with different political systems, such as Belize's continental neighbours in Central America. This can be the subject of a future research project.

### ***A Summary of the Research Methodology***

As indicated, this study explores Belize as a single-country case of pervasive political clientelism in a small independent Commonwealth Caribbean state. Apart from resource constraints, there are strong arguments in favour of this single-case approach.<sup>54</sup> The particularistic nature of political clientelism requires research approaches that are intensive, in-depth, and which allow for close

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<sup>53</sup> For instance, contradictions in democratic practice are also observable in the five Overseas Territories of the United Kingdom. See, for example, Sutton (2009) and Clegg (2012; 2011).

<sup>54</sup> As Creswell (1998: 61) noted, the case study allows for "an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case (or multiple cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context."

investigation of contextually-determined manifestations.<sup>55</sup> Most important, is the key premise that Belize represents not only an illustrative, but also a ‘critical instance’ case<sup>56</sup> of political clientelism becoming more entrenched in (and challenging for) small Commonwealth Caribbean parliamentary democracies. As such, detailing the Belize case facilitates comparison with other cases in this region. Limiting the thesis’ comparative analysis of the Belize case to the Commonwealth Caribbean minimises one of the more cited constraints of case study research: the challenge of using case study results to compare cases in other contexts (George and Bennett, 2005: 19-22).

This thesis employs an overall qualitative methodological approach for the Belize case study. Graziano (1983: 426) correctly noted that political clientelism presents difficult research challenges of ‘observation’: “how to observe relationships that are amorphous and ill-defined, latent rather than explicit, and often disreputable if not illegal.” To this list can be added ‘informal’ and ‘dynamic’. As the literature review indicates, the broad methodologies of ‘qualitative’ and ‘quantitative’ research have both been used to examine political clientelism and, as in all areas of social science research, there are passionate proponents of each. Although quantitative studies have advanced understanding of political clientelism and allowed for some multi-variable and cross-national analysis,<sup>57</sup> they are generally limited in their ability to meet the challenges identified by Graziano.<sup>58</sup> This is, indeed, true for most studies of democracy that inquire into relationships that go beyond its formal and procedural features.

The study’s qualitative research methodology can be further described as a mixed-methods approach that employs both ‘comparative-historical’ and ‘partial-

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<sup>55</sup> Yin (1994) is among those to point out that case studies are suitable for examining existing phenomena in their real life context and can help establish the relationships between them using triangulation of a variety of data sources.

<sup>56</sup> Critical instance case studies generally explore a case in which the dependent variable being studied is assumed to occur at an above average rate. They are useful for focusing on causality and implications.

<sup>57</sup> Examples include the studies by Stokes and Dunning (2008), Schedler (2002), Robinson and Verdier (2003), Weitz-Shapiro (2007) and Kopecky et al (2007).

<sup>58</sup> In this regard, Robinson (2008: 3) argued that although quantitative studies are “more comparable [than qualitative studies], they tend to abstract away from important details by using proximate measures of clientelism based on surveys.”

ethnographic' methodological elements. The comparative-historical method<sup>59</sup> is used to document and compare the evolution of Belize's political clientelism and its characteristics at various critical historical points. Additionally, this method allows for comparative discussions and analysis between Belize and states in the wider region. Some of the most substantive and influential studies of political clientelism have used ethnographic methods, allowing for close-up observation of personal relationships and political processes as they happen.<sup>60</sup> However, although excellent for gathering information on dyadic and constituency-based relationships, ethnography is less useful, on its own, for examination of the macro-political dimension of keen interest in this thesis. Within this mixed-methods approach, the key research techniques employed include the review of secondary and archival material, semi-structured interviews of carefully selected elite political actors, informal interviews with a sample of citizens in selected political constituencies and observation of political events and processes at the constituency level.

Apart from the on-going review of the relevant secondary literature, the field work in Belize proper occurred over the eight-month period from September 2010 to April 2011. Importantly and conveniently, this research period coincided with the intra-party convention 'season' (selecting candidates for the 2012 general election) of both major political parties. At the start of this period (August 2010), the total number of registered voters in Belize was 162,150, with a 50.7 per cent to 49.3 per cent male/female breakdown.<sup>61</sup> The total number of electoral constituencies, spread across six districts,<sup>62</sup> has been 31 since 2007, and the number of registered voters per constituency ranged from 3,131 to

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<sup>59</sup>A useful description of the comparative-historical method of qualitative research appears in Rueschemeyer et al. (1992: 20): "characterized...by a search for critical collective actors in historical change, and by an emphasis on the changing world historical environment of national histories."

<sup>60</sup>The works by Auyero (1999, 2000), Lazar (2004) and Gay (2006) employed ethnographic approaches. In a review of political ethnography, Tilly (2006: 410) argued that "to the extent that politics actually consists not of big structures and prescribed roles but of dynamic, contingent interaction among persons, households, and small groups, political ethnography provides privileged access to its processes, causes, and effects."

<sup>61</sup>Electoral figures in this section are from Elections and Boundaries Department (2010). The voting age is 18 years of age. In August 2010, 93 per cent of the voting age population was reported as registered, but this had decreased to 78 per cent by February 2011 based on a new voting age population estimate (from 53 per cent to 63 per cent).

<sup>62</sup>The country of Belize is administratively divided into six districts (see map at Figure 1): Belize, Cayo, Orange Walk, Corozal, Stann Creek and Toledo.

7,125 (with an average of 5,231). The breakdown of the constituencies by political parties in 2008 is illustrated in the electoral map at Figure 3.

**FIGURE 3**  
**Electoral Map of Belize by Political Party Holding Each Constituency in 2008**

Source: <http://psephos.adam-carr.net/countries/b/belize/belizemapsindex.shtml>.

Note: The grey colour signifies that the area (one or more constituencies) is enlarged on the map.

As the district with the largest population, the Belize district has 13 of the 31 constituencies, and 14 are in predominantly rural areas. The governing United Democratic Party (UDP) held 26 seats (83 per cent), and the opposition People's United Party (PUP) held five seats (17 per cent), for a four to one seat advantage. For in-depth research, a purposive sample of four electoral constituencies was selected for more focused attention and as areas in which to conduct citizen interviews and event observation. These are not treated primarily as 'cases' for comprehensive write-up and cross-constituency comparison. Rather, they serve the purpose of narrowing the research scope and facilitating access to citizens and party-based activities. The four

constituencies were selected based on five criteria: the political party holding the seat, balance in geographical location, urban/rural breakdown, ethnic make-up and the incidence of poverty. Table 2 summarises the basic features of these constituencies, and a more detailed description of each constituency is at Appendix 1.

**TABLE 2**  
**Basic Profile of the Four Constituencies Selected for Focused Research by Selection Criteria (at August 2010)**

| <b>DIVISION<br/>(No. of voters)</b>   | <b>DISTRICT<br/>(Location)</b> | <b>URBAN/<br/>RURAL</b>        | <b>ETHNIC<br/>MAKE-UP</b>                     | <b>POVERTY AND<br/>INEQUALITY (2009)</b>                                  | <b>POLITICAL<br/>PARTY</b> |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------|
| <b>Pickstock</b><br>(3,168)           | Belize (Central East Belize)   | Urban                          | Vast Majority Creole                          | District poverty is 28.8% <sup>63</sup> and Gini Coefficient (GC) is 0.41 | UDP                        |
| <b>Orange Walk Central</b><br>(6,139) | Orange Walk (Northern Belize)  | Urban with some rural villages | Vast Majority Mestizo                         | District poverty is 42.8% and GC is 0.36                                  | PUP                        |
| <b>Toledo East</b><br>(6,183)         | Toledo (Southern Belize)       | Rural and Urban Mix            | Creole, Garifuna, Maya, Mestizo, East Indians | District poverty is 60.4% and GC is 0.46                                  | UDP                        |
| <b>Belmopan</b><br>(6,733)            | Cayo (Western Belize)          | Mostly urban with some rural   | Mestizo, Creole, Maya, Garifuna               | District poverty is 40.6% and GC is 0.41                                  | UDP                        |

*Sources: Elections and Boundaries Department (2010) and the Country Poverty Assessment (2010).*

*Note: 'Voters' = registered voters. National poverty was measured at 41.3 per cent and the national Gini coefficient (GC) was 0.42 in 2009. Poverty is defined here as the percentage of individuals with incomes below the national poverty line. The GC is a measure of income inequality and varies between 0, representing a wholly equal distribution, and 1, representing a wholly unequal distribution. PUP is People's United Party, UDP is United Democratic Party.*

The field work execution included four overlapping parts: archival and library review, a phase of elite interviews, an overlapping phase of citizen interviews and event observations. The archival and library review was directed at filling in information gaps on the historical background and baseline of political clientelism in Belize and at gathering news and official information on particular cases. This research took place at the Belize National Archives (BNA), the George Price Archival Collection (GPAC), the Belize National Heritage Library (BNHL), the Belize Court Registry (BCR) and the Belize Parliamentary Archives (BPA). Several hundred items of archival and other documents were procured

<sup>63</sup> Although district level poverty in the Belize district was the lowest of all districts, the Pickstock constituency is in an area of high urban poverty in Belize City.

and reviewed. These included news stories (newspaper, radio and television), commission and other official reports, official minutes, court case files, inter-ministerial correspondence, and political party and other organisation-based documents.

Overall, as the principal research technique, the author's interviews produced the most plentiful and useful information. In the first 'elite interviews' phase, 69 semi-structured interviews were conducted with carefully selected past politicians, active politicians, political operatives, senior public officers and key 'non-partisan' informants. (See full list of elite interviewees in the Bibliography.) These included all the elected representatives of the four constituencies selected, as well as most of their challengers. Most of these interviewees were pre-selected before field work commenced, but others were added once in the field, as informed by on-going research. The selection criteria included age, party affiliation, gender, district of residence, rural/urban balance and ethnicity. The objective of this set of elite interviews was to gather information and insights on the status of political clientelism before independence, on its expansion and on its 2010/2011 status. (The indicative questions used as guides are listed in Appendix 2.)

The 69 elite interviewees include 46 past or active politicians, 23 affiliated with the PUP, 21 with the UDP and two third party leaders. Ten of the 46 politicians were active in the pre-independence period. The politicians included all the three former prime ministers of Belize, the prime minister during coverage of the study and 10 sitting ministers of government. Twenty-three of the politicians are described as 'active', in that they were representatives or candidates for elective office when interviewed. Twelve of all interviewees were women, with eight of these being past or current politicians.<sup>64</sup> Most interviewees gave consent to be quoted by signing informed consent forms. (See Appendix 3 for a sample of the informed consent form used). Where a quotation from those not signing the form was deemed useful, written consent was sought before using this material in the thesis.

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<sup>64</sup> Seventeen per cent of the active and past politicians (eight of 46) were women, which is significantly higher a proportion than Belize's poor record for female participation in politics generally. For example, of all candidates seeking to be elected to the House of Representatives since independence, only 5.6 per cent have been women (Lewis, 2012: 52).

The second phase of interviews (focused discussions with constituents) accounts for what was referred to above as the 'partial ethnographic' methodology. The author spent an average of three to five weeks in each of the four electoral constituencies selected for focused attention. In each constituency the author met with political leaders and officials of both major parties, conducted informal interviews and discussions with constituents and brokers, and observed a variety of partisan political events and processes. The key objective of this phase was to gather in-depth information and perceptions from the viewpoints of citizens and brokers about the nature, operation and implications of political clientelism. Although mostly informal, these discussions were also based on a set of indicative question areas. These are detailed in Appendix 4. One hundred and fourteen such informal discussions were conducted, 70 with males and 44 with females. The average number per constituency was 28.5: Pickstock (27), Orange Walk Central (26), Toledo East (35) and Belmopan (26). The selection of constituents was partly based on suggestions from key informants and on random sampling while walking and driving the streets of the constituencies. Although most such interviews were conducted individually, a few discussions were held with more than one person at a time (but never more than three).

Six interviews were conducted with brokers from both political parties: five males to one female, and four affiliated with the UDP and two with the PUP. There was also one focus-group type session with a group of 32 undergraduate students at the University of Belize (UB) campus in Toledo. Due to the obvious confidentiality concerns related to the subject of clientelist politics in a small society, respondents in this second phase were assured of confidentiality. For this reason, the individuals are anonymised with a basic coding system. The Bibliography contains a full listing based on this coding system. Apart from direct elite interviews, there were also communications (e-mails, telephone calls and brief conversations) aimed at soliciting specific information. The key communications conducted and from which information was used are listed in the Bibliography. In addition to on-going general observation in each constituency, a total of sixteen political events were specifically observed,

including political party conventions, political clinics in operation and neighbourhood meetings held by political parties. These too are listed in the Bibliography.

In summary, the thesis' findings are based on the triangulation of information from secondary literature, elite interviews, citizen interviews, news reports, official documents and event observation. It is important to note that because of Belize's small size, the partisan biases of the local media are magnified and, often, more sensational than in larger states with more developed journalistic traditions.<sup>65</sup> In this regard, care is taken to present a balanced picture by referencing stories from media known to favour one or another political party, and by triangulating information.

### ***Chapter Organisation of the Thesis***

The thesis' four chapters and the Conclusion directly address, in turn, each of the five main research questions. The chapter flow follows the trajectory of political clientelism in three distinct phases identified in the thesis: a pre-independence rooting phase (1954 to 1980), a transitional, but still formative, phase in the first decade of independence (1981 to circa 1991), and a phase of rampant expansion (circa 1992 to 2011).

Chapter 1 asks how and why political clientelism took root in Belize's nascent politician-citizen relationships, and what relative salience competitive party politics, the control of public allocation institutions, poor socio-economic conditions, civil society organising, small-state scale, and multi-ethnicity had in this formative period. The chapter covers the trajectory of political clientelism in the formative period of Belize's pre-independence modern politics from 1954 to 1980 and summaries the state-of-play at the time of independence, based on the nine tracer markers selected. Additionally, the chapter explores the transitional, but still formative, period represented by Belize's first decade after independence (1981 to circa 1991), in which there were important political developments with significant implications for the expansion of political clientelism in the 1990s.

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<sup>65</sup> The partisan leanings of the key newspapers and television stations are identified in the Bibliography at 'Newspapers and Other Media'.



Chapters 2, 3 and 4 all focus on what the thesis denotes as the 'rampant' phase of political clientelism from circa 1992 to 2011. Chapter 2 addresses the second research question: What are the principal manifestations of the expansion of political clientelism in Belize in the post-independence period? As such, the chapter builds the empirical foundation required for exploration of the study's independent variables and for in-depth analysis of the implications for Belize's democratic governance. It pinpoints the late 1990s as a pivotal surge period in the upward trajectory of political clientelism and it details the critical features of the on-going clientelist relationships among the state, political parties, politicians, citizens and financiers.

Chapter 3 addresses the third research question: What factors have contributed to this high rate of expansion of clientelism at the same time as formal democratic advances in Belize? The first section examines the explanatory salience of developments in the political-institutional context, with a focus on political control of state institutions and party competition. The second section addresses the relevance of socio-economic developments for the expansion of political clientelism, with a focus on poverty and inequality, neoliberal economic policies and on alternatives to clientelism in the formal and informal sectors.

Chapter 4 addresses the fourth research question: What are the critical implications of widespread clientelism for Belize's quality of democracy? It explores the implications for: electoral processes, public institutions and political parties, participatory democracy beyond elections (including those for informal political influence and problem-solving) day-to-day relationships between citizens and elected representatives, the work of civil society organisations, resource distribution and social welfare, public policy and reform, fiscal management and political culture.

The Conclusion synthesises the key findings and examines the final research question: How does the experience of Belize compare to experiences of other parliamentary democracies in the Commonwealth Caribbean? It closes with a discussion on the thesis' academic contributions and on the prospects for mitigating political clientelism in Belize.

# CHAPTER 1

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## **PLANTING THE SEEDS OF MODERN POLITICAL CLIENTELISM: 1954 to circa 1991**

### **Introduction**

Colonial Belize had long been characterised by inadequate national responses to poor living conditions for the majority of Belizeans. However, the colony lacked two other basic conditions identified as critical to the growth of political clientelism in emerging democracies: dominant control of public resources by local leaders and competitive party politics. These were both gradually consolidated after the granting of universal adult suffrage in 1954 and then full internal self-government a decade later. By independence in 1981, when Belize's Westminster model of governance was all but totally formalised, political clientelism had begun to take root.

Although Belize's political historiography is relatively comprehensive in its coverage of party politics and legislative governance,<sup>66</sup> there has been but passing scholarly treatment of the role of political clientelism in the formative period of Belize's modern politics. As part of its overall goal of setting the political backdrop and the investigative baseline for this study, this chapter also aims to help fill this gap. The chapter asks how and why political clientelism took root in Belize's nascent politician-citizen relationships, and what relative salience competitive party politics, the control of public allocation institutions, responses to poor socio-economic conditions, small-state scale and multi-ethnicity had in this formative period (1954-circa 1991). The chapter argues that Belize's transition from colony to independent state fits well in the aforementioned 'messy' democracy conceptual framework in which informal political institutions, such as political clientelism, morph and expand asymmetrically, alongside the on-going process of formal democratisation.

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<sup>66</sup> Relevant studies on Belize's modern political history include Grant (1976), Bolland (1977, 1991) and Shoman (1979, 1987).

## The Pre-Independence Political Context

### *Clientelism before the Emergence of Political Parties*

As part of establishing the political background for the emergence of party-based clientelism in Belize, it is essential to acknowledge that clientelist behaviour pre-dated the commencement of Belize's modern politics in the 1950s. A notable example is found in the village governance practices of the indigenous Maya, which preceded British colonialisation. Under this scheme (denoted the 'alcalde system'), male adults of a particular village select a headman who enjoys far-reaching powers, including assigning residential and agricultural land, admittance of new villagers and some matters of jurisprudence.<sup>67</sup> As Bolland (1988: 132) noted, the British settlers adapted and institutionalised aspects of this Maya form of village governance "because it worked." Additionally, and as part of the skewed land ownership and distribution system in early colonial Belize, large landowners did engage in clientelist-like relationships with the landless.<sup>68</sup> However, the later, more political, manifestations of clientelism during colonialism are of primary interest here.

Existing historical narratives demonstrate that British governors, who had full control of the political economy of Belize during colonialism, employed state clientelism as one of several tools in attempts to diffuse local protest against poor living conditions and authoritarian rule and so further maintain the status quo until the granting of independence became unavoidable. In particular, several historians have examined the practices that Belize's colonial authorities employed to dispense food, land, short-term work and public office jobs to targeted individuals and groups so as to quell periodic uprisings and curry political favour.<sup>69</sup> As Bolland (1988: 184) showed, one of the ways the colonial establishment responded to workers' resistance was by "providing (or sometimes just promising) relief to assuage a proportion of the working people...this was part of the Colonial Development and Welfare programme used across British West Indies." Macpherson (2003: 279) argued that, in the

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<sup>67</sup> The alcalde system, which still survives today in some 35 Maya villages in southern Belize, was first legalised in the Alcalde Jurisdiction Act of 1858.

<sup>68</sup> Bolland and Shoman (1977) identified such relationships in their study on land ownership and use in Belize.

<sup>69</sup> These include Ashdown (1978, 1979), Bolland (1977, 1988, 1997) and Macpherson (2003, 2007).

nationalist period in the 1950s, working women involved in the movement were treated by the British and the local elite “as politically disordered” and there were attempts to “transform them from militant wage-earners to clients of state social services” through the use of short-lived social welfare work programmes.

To the extent that one central objective was to maintain authoritarian power and so ‘buy’ more time in control, it is valid to denote these colonial activities as political patronage. Taken together, these strategies were effectively an earlier ‘political’ form of ‘state clientelism’ practiced by a small British and local political elite and directed at both individuals and narrow groups. Indeed, nationalist leaders later adopted and adapted similar approaches as they gained more control over the powers of state and the distribution of public resources.

### ***Party Politics, Self-Government and Popular Participation***

The top-down patronage strategies of the colonial elite were exercised in a societal context in which the general population had minimal opportunity for electoral participation. Just a decade before full adult suffrage in 1954, property and gender restrictions limited registered voters to only 1.3 per cent of the population (Courtenay, 1956: 26).<sup>70</sup> One central objective of nationalist movements across the Caribbean was to erase such disparities. As in other British colonies in the region, political parties in Belize emerged from a nationalist movement born in working-class resistance and labour union activities, and given electoral credence by the achievement of universal adult suffrage. A series of protest activities sparked by a monetary devaluation (directed by Whitehall) in 1949 led to the formation of the nationalist People’s United Party (PUP) in September 1950. Thereafter, a PUP-union alliance organised a spate of strikes and civil unrest that helped to push the colonial establishment to give in to demands for a new constitution with universal adult suffrage in 1954. This constitution was, in effect, the formal introduction of the Westminster political model—an essence of which (as proclaimed by a visiting British constitutional advisor) “is the existence of two parties” (Blood, 1959: 24).

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<sup>70</sup> From 1871 (when Belize became a crown colony) to 1931, there was a Legislative Council that was wholly appointed. Thereafter, some members were elected by a small number of registered voters who met salary, property and other criteria. After 1959, there was a totally elected Legislative Assembly (M. Palacio, 2002: 3-7).

In 1956, conflicts among the original PUP leadership led to the formation of a splinter party that would evolve into the National Independence Party (NIP) in 1957.<sup>71</sup> As the second major party, the NIP was the official opposition until 1973, when it morphed into the United Democratic Party (UDP) after an alliance with two other small parties. Although the PUP won every general election up to independence, the NIP/UDP competed in each and gained increasing proportions of the national vote. In 1961 the NIP won 23.2 per cent of the vote, and then 39.4 per cent and 39.8 per cent of the vote in 1965 and 1969, respectively (M. Palacio, 1993: 10). In 1974 the UDP won 38.1 per cent, and in 1979 its support increased to 46.8 per cent. As such, Belize's competitive two-party system was technically well in evolution by the time of internal self-government in 1964, and well advanced by the time of independence. No other political party posed any serious threat to the evolution of Belize's two-party model.<sup>72</sup> Even as the opposition won larger percentages of the popular vote, the PUP held disproportionate seat majorities in the House of Representatives, and consequently on every public sector body it had the authority to appoint.

In this pre-independence period, the citizenry were presented with clearly distinguishable party and national visions on which to assess the PUP and the NIP/UDP. The PUP's central goal was national unity and full political independence as a means for addressing poor socio-economic conditions and achieving national development.<sup>73</sup> Although embracing the Commonwealth Caribbean, the PUP also actively promoted Belize's Central American identity. The NIP, on the other hand, espoused a more sentimental and less anti-colonial stance, emphasised Belize's British Caribbean identity and pitched an overtly patriotic 'no Guatemala' message as part of its political identity.<sup>74</sup> After 1973, the UDP became more free market-oriented and sought to downplay colonialist tendencies of the NIP. At the same time, however, it argued that independence

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<sup>71</sup> The NIP was itself the merger of two parties: the National Party and the Honduran Independence Party,

<sup>72</sup> In the 1961 election, the Corozal Democratic Party (CDP), a district-based party, won 11.4 per cent of the vote, the highest percentage by a non PUP/UDP party in the electoral history of Belize. Except for a 4.7 per cent showing by the Corozal United Front (CUF) in 1974, alternative parties polled below one per cent in all other pre-independence elections (M. Palacio, 1993: 75-87).

<sup>73</sup> This historical summary of political parties is based largely on Grant (1976) and Shoman (1987).

<sup>74</sup> Guatemala has had a long-standing territorial claim to Belize. See Shoman (2010a) for a comprehensive history of this claim.

should be delayed until the British had resolved the Guatemalan claim and until Belize was more developed economically.

Along with this expansion of competitive party politics, the achievement of internal self-government in January 1964 was also of paramount significance for the emergence of party-based political clientelism. This is largely because it gave elected local politicians more control over resource distribution. Except for defence, internal security, external affairs and specific senior-level public service appointments, Belize's elected representatives now had control over all other internal institutions and home affairs, allowing for greater influence over the distribution of key public resources. Although full control of the powers and resources of the state was to be delayed for 17 years,<sup>75</sup> this situation represented a stark difference from the near-total powers of the British colonial authorities. In particular, and as part of the political tutelage taking place, the PUP government could now propose national budgets, develop socio-economic policies and programmes, and exercise growing control and discretionary influence over public service resources, some public service jobs and most local government matters.

The new self-government constitution also further consolidated additional formal features of the Westminster model, manifested by an expanded House of Representatives of eighteen members based on FPTP electoral rules, an appointed upper chamber called the Senate, and the establishment of the offices of Premier and Leader of the Opposition. As local leaders increased their participation in these formal political structures of the young democracy, so did the Belizean people. In addition to joining political parties, attending party activities and volunteering for party campaigns, they enthusiastically exercised new voting rights. Whereas only 2.8 per cent of the population was registered to vote in 1948, this share had increased tenfold by 1954 (after universal adult suffrage) and to circa 35 per cent by 1979.<sup>76</sup> Between 1954 and 1979, an average of 72.8 per cent of the registered electorate voted in seven general elections. Importantly, voter participation in local government elections also

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<sup>75</sup> The British were ready to grant Belize independence after 1961, but attempts to resolve the territorial claim by Guatemala before independence caused the delay.

<sup>76</sup> Figures in this paragraph are calculated from statistics compiled by M. Palacio (1993: 75-87) and Shoman (1987: 38).

grew as candidates of the two major parties expanded their competitive participation in the evolving system of municipal and village governance.<sup>77</sup>

By the end of the 1970s, the party tentacles of the PUP and UDP had begun to reach almost every community, and it was through them that most formal (and then informal) political participation transpired in the small colony. Party membership, although not as high as in the mid-1950s, remained significant. In the case of the ruling PUP, there were house-to-house membership drives in the 1950s to build working-class support, and in the 1960s there was a concerted effort to broaden the membership base to “all classes and sectors of the society” (Shoman, 1987: 69). However, people’s participation after self-government was not just limited to formal voting and to political party activity. Informal political activity (union action, petitions to the governor and civil protests) continued, albeit with decreasing frequency and numbers.<sup>78</sup> In regard to the once powerful labour unions, their marginalisation by political parties has been fairly well documented.<sup>79</sup> In short, after the establishment of political parties, the leadership of the unions and parties merged for a time, and then the parties took over the mobilising role of the unions. One of the most graphic indicators of the demise of the union movement is that membership in the largest union, the General Workers Union (GWU), fell from 10,500 in 1954 to only 700 in 1956 (Shoman, 1987: 24-25).

Friendly and charity-based societies such as the Black Cross Nurses and the Women’s League remained important, albeit weakening, forums for women on such issues as social justice, employment and political participation.<sup>80</sup> In the late 1960s and early 1970s, a number of radical groups, inspired by the international civil rights movement, challenged the dominance of the PUP and UDP and the slow pace of change in the colony. These included the United Black Association for Development (UBAD) and the People’s Action Committee (PAC), which organised anti-British and anti-political party demonstrations and public

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<sup>77</sup> By 1958, in addition to Belize City, elections were being held in six municipalities. This increased to eight after 1981. A Village Council Act was enacted in 1999 and some 200 villages now have regular elections (Vernon, 2008).

<sup>78</sup> However, national debates about negotiations with Guatemala always brought out large crowds.

<sup>79</sup> See, for example, the works of Grant (1976), Bolland (1988) and Shoman (1987).

<sup>80</sup> In particular, see Macpherson (2003 2007) for a critical revisionist history of the role women in the pre-independence political history of Belize.

meetings to promote social justice, black power and immediate independence.<sup>81</sup> However, these too were short-lived, and most of their key leaders (including former prime minister, Said Musa and former minister, Assad Shoman) were co-opted into the PUP (Shoman, 2011: 197).

### ***Fragile Economy, Hard Times and Diverse Ethnicity***

The emergence of political parties, the establishment of formal democratic institutions and increased political participation accrued in a small country with a fragile economy and a tiny multi-ethnic population, the majority of whom were poor. The forestry industry, on which the economy of Belize had been based since its settlement, had collapsed by the time of self-government in 1964, and policies for economic diversification, with a focus on agricultural production, had finally become more sustained. Bulmer-Thomas and Bulmer-Thomas (2012: 116) demonstrated that although there was an increase in agricultural exports, “it was not fast enough to compensate fully for the decline in forestry and unemployment remained a serious problem.” These authors (2012: 117) further documented that this situation, combined with the poor state of infrastructure, the inadequacy of the revenue pool in a tiny population, and the loss of bilateral preferential treatment of exports to the United Kingdom, resulted in “an unimpressive macroeconomic performance in the last decades of colonialism.”

As Bolland (1988: 184) noted for the formative period of the nationalist movement, “conditions of the working people were terrible—low wages, intermittent employment and under-employment, atrocious housing, hunger, and bad health, poor education or none at all.” These conditions, which had changed little by the time of self-government, were exacerbated in 1961 by Hurricane Hattie, which had devastating effects on the economy generally and on the infrastructure of several coastal towns and communities. As evidenced in part by the early victories of the nationalist PUP, the impetus for Belizeans to utilise their voting rights lay, in large part, in the hope that these harsh social and economic conditions would improve with self-government and independence.

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<sup>81</sup> See Grant (1976), Hyde (1995) and Shoman (2011) for histories of these non-party groups.



Belize's population (90,505 in 1960, 119,645 in 1970 and 145,343 in 1980) represented a small and personalised political playing field on which politician-citizen relations unfolded.<sup>82</sup> The total number of registered electors in any one constituency was tiny, averaging only between 1,500 and 3,000 over this period,<sup>83</sup> which contributed to the evolution of highly familiar electoral politics. By the time of self-government, Belize's diverse multi-ethnicity had been long established by a history of settlement, resettlement, forced migrations and the influx of political and economic refugees. The last pre-independence census (1980) revealed that Creoles were forty per cent of the population, Mestizos were thirty-three per cent, Maya groups were ten per cent, Garinagu were eight per cent, East Indians were two per cent and others seven per cent.<sup>84</sup> These groups have clustered geographically and around distinct economic activities and there has always been a particular ethnic majority in almost every political constituency.

In a society with such diverse and dynamic multi-ethnicity, some find it surprising that support for political parties did not become ethnically based, as it did in the sister states of Trinidad and Tobago and Guyana. As Bolland (1997: 276-281) and Shoman (2010b) have shown, neither of the two major parties have actively and publicly sought political identification based on ethnic issues and allegiances, and both parties have generally received relatively balanced support from all ethnic groups.<sup>85</sup> Various historians have explained this relatively exceptional feature of Belizean politics by pointing to early efforts by the PUP to implement its goal "to achieve and preserve for the people of Belize national unity and political and economic independence" (People's United Party, 1954: 2).<sup>86</sup> This 'national freedom and unity' imperative translated into seeking

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<sup>82</sup> Figures for 1960 and 1970 are from Shoman (2011: 71), and that for 1980 from the Abstract of Statistics (2007: 13).

<sup>83</sup> Figures calculated from election data compiled by M. Palacio (1993: 12).

<sup>84</sup> Figures on ethnicity demographics come from the 1980 Population Census. In the Belize context, 'Creole' refers to a mix predominantly of African and British, 'Mestizo' to a mix of Maya and Spanish (mostly descendants of Maya and Mestizo refugees from the Guerra de Las Castas in Mexico in the late 1880s) and 'Garinagu' (the 'Garifuna people') refers to the Black Caribs who re-settled in southern Belize after being re-located to Central America from the Eastern Caribbean by the British in the early 1800s.

<sup>85</sup> In the pre-independence era, some have argued that the NIP/UDP had more of a base of core support from the Creole elite than did the PUP (Shoman, 2010; Grant, 1976). Also, because the PUP was opposed to the West Indian Federation and more open to relationships with Belize's geographic neighbours in Central America, the PUP was perceived by some as more 'Latino' friendly.

<sup>86</sup> Bolland (1997: 276) has correctly pointed further back to the contribution of the national organising efforts by unions before the PUP was formed.

support across geographical, gender, class and ethnic lines—a strategy that the UDP sought to emulate to remain nationally competitive. The relative success of this strategy is reflected in Hanson’s (1974: 423) survey findings on the political perceptions of university students: “There is no strong relation between ethnic identity and party preference...there is also a surprising consensus that the two major ethnic groups [Creoles and Mestizos] are influential in politics...this consensus may be a major factor dampening ethnic polarisation...as long as people feel that ethnicity does not determine access to politics and government, they are less likely to base political attitudes on ethnic identity.”

### **An ‘Innocent’ Phase of Political Clientelism: 1954 to 1980**

As in other British colonies in the Caribbean, laws to arrest some manifestations of political clientelism were already transplanted and enacted as part of the formalisation of new electoral institutions that accompanied universal adult suffrage and competitive elections. A section in the British Honduras Representation of the People Ordinance (1953) deemed the practice of trading or promising money, favours or support for votes illegal and indictable, with penalties of fines or prison time, and debarment from future election participation applicable upon conviction.<sup>87</sup>

A much-opined piece of conventional wisdom in political discussions across Belize is that party-based political clientelism was initiated by the PUP, and in particular, by George Price, the PUP’s co-founder, and long-time populist leader and the first prime minister of Belize.<sup>88</sup> Although almost all political actors interviewed for this study endorsed this popular view on the origins of political clientelism, there were some refinements, not all of which can be attributed to party affiliation (of interviewees). Among these is the proposition that, if there was political clientelism before independence, it was inevitable in origin, innocent<sup>89</sup> in intent and comparatively mild in manifestation. Before examining

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<sup>87</sup> This section of the original legislation has been revised only minimally over time. Revisions include increases in the monetary amounts of gifts allowed and of penalties. Up to the 1964 election, gifts to voters could be no more than 25 cents. This increased to \$4 in 1978 and to \$20 after independence (Government of Belize, 2000: Section 31).

<sup>88</sup> See Smith (2011) for the only full-length authorised biography of Price.

<sup>89</sup> Several former and current politicians referred to political clientelism in pre-independence Belize as ‘innocent’.

the merits of these arguments, this section first explores how clientelist practices entered the realm of politician-citizen relationships in the pre-independence period.

### ***The Early PUP as a Programmatic Party***

A member of Price's first Cabinet recollected that in 1950s and 1960s, people who made personal requests of PUP politicians were generally satisfied with the campaign pitch that "our job is to help you help yourself" through national programmes.<sup>90</sup> In the pre-independence period of modern Belizean politics, the PUP controlled all the public institutions of resource allocation that were devolved after self-government.<sup>91</sup> In the 1960s and part of the 1970s, PUP government attempted to direct much of the new legislative and budgetary powers of allocation towards ameliorating some of the long-standing socio-economic problems. In a context in which there was much to create, these efforts focused largely on the preparation and implementation of development policies, infrastructure projects and social and economic programmes. Such achievements as the construction of roads, a new international airport, housing developments, land reform, the promotion of agriculture and fisheries to replace forestry, strategies to promote foreign investment and the further expansion of local government, are documented in various studies on Belize.<sup>92</sup> Albeit bringing much economic and infrastructure damage, Hurricane Hattie in 1961 sparked new funding opportunities for other development initiatives, including the major (and, at the time, controversial) decision to build a new capital city from scratch in a rural and under-populated location near the geographic centre of the country.

These early programmes and initiatives of the PUP government, which were also used to appeal to voters, are examples of what Keefer (2007: 804) referred to as "non-targeted goods" that are collectively directed at the citizenry at large and not primarily "targeted" at individuals or "narrow groups of voters." Indeed, in the formative political period up to the 1970s, the PUP as a political party was decidedly more policy-oriented and progressive in its actions in government

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<sup>90</sup> Interview with Fredrick Hunter, former minister (PUP), 5 November 2010, Belize City.

<sup>91</sup> The key exceptions were the few times that the opposition party gained control of a municipality.

<sup>92</sup> See, for example, Dobson (1973) for a general overview, Bulmer-Thomas and Bulmer-Thomas (2012) for economic developments, and Medina (2004) for citrus industry developments.

than it was a party of patronage. Although not in power, the opposition NIP also matched this description—to the extent that the two parties held some clearly distinguishable national positions. As such, pre-independence party-citizen relationships in Belize (to draw on Kitschelt and Wilkinson's (2007: 7-9) party typology), were, for some time, more programmatic than clientelist.

Although Shefter (1977, 1994) based his political party studies on the United States and western Europe, his findings add insights into the PUP's early focus on programmatic appeals to voters. In his comparative studies of the United States, Britain and France as states at similar levels of development, Shefter (1994: 21-60) explored the relative prevalence of clientelism as formal democracy grows and suggested that there is a phase, in the early processes of state and party formation, in which appeals to an expanding electorate are based more on ideology and programmatic promises because the state patronage system is not fully established. Shefter implied that new political parties, which do not yet have or have only just achieved control of a state's bureaucracy under conditions of full adult suffrage, tend to utilise more programmatic and less clientelist approaches until they evolve into established parties. This is a reasonably plausible interpretation for a party like the PUP, which benefited from the momentum of working-class and anti-British voter support for some time after the start of the nationalist movement in the 1950s. However, the duration and extent of programmatic approaches are also often directly related to other factors, including their effectiveness in meeting voters' expectations and to the level of competition from other parties.

In his assessment of political relationships in Belize after self-government was achieved in 1964, Shoman (1987: 31) recounted: "Despite the improvements made in infrastructure development, education, health, and other areas, the majority of the poor people felt profoundly dissatisfied with the performance of the government." With limited state resources, the PUP manoeuvred to fulfil some of its promises of better living conditions, to maintain popular and middle class support against colonialism and to compete against a gradually strengthening opposition party during the period of delayed independence. Along this lengthy path, the record shows that the PUP gradually began to use

some of its new powers of allocation to influence voters through more targeted and individual approaches. In these particular circumstances, and considering the precedent set by British colonial authorities prior to self-government, political clientelism was likely too tempting an electoral strategy to ignore in the context of unmet needs and an increasingly frustrated and impatient citizenry.

### ***Pre-Independence Manifestations of Political Clientelism***

A reconstruction of this pre-independence phase of modern political clientelism reveals a loose and asymmetrical set of informal operations, which emanated from Price and gradually became more institutionalised, widespread and publicly acceptable. As PUP party leader (1956 to 1996), First Minister (1961 to 1964) and Premier (1964 to 1981), Price set a precedent of personalised politician-citizen relationships and became the original, if inadvertent, ‘national political patron’. Price, who had given up his training to become a priest during the Second World War, was not new to dealing with personal requests. As the personal secretary (1942 to 1955) for Robert Turton, an influential and wealthy local businessman, Price interacted directly with an almost daily flow of loan-seekers and suppliants (Smith, 2011: 58).<sup>93</sup> Upon entering municipal politics in 1944, Price honed a highly familiar, hands-on and paternalistic campaign and leadership style. After enactment of the 1954 constitution, Price was elected to the Legislative Council, beginning a 30-year stint of consecutive national election victories. Thereafter, and in addition to interactions with citizens in their homes and on streets, Price’s primary mode of monitoring the needs of citizens and dispensing targeted assistance was through the operation of increasingly regular political clinics in the then capital, Belize City.<sup>94</sup> Price recounted that he needed to “appoint a day and specific place to facilitate people” in his constituency and from all over the country to come to him with their concerns and needs.<sup>95</sup> So began the iconic Price weekly ‘Wednesday clinics’ where people from every district came to him for “any personal need”, including jobs,

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<sup>93</sup> In the formative period of nationalist politics in the 1940s and 1950s, Turton was probably one of Belize’s first donors of private funds to particular politicians (such as Price), if not to the PUP itself. This is a story in Belize’s modern politics that still needs to be further researched and told.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with George Price, co-founder of the PUP, first premier (1964-1981) and first and former prime minister (1981-1984 and 1989-1993), 17 November 2010, Belize City.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*

medicines, money for food, and, as he said with a chuckle, “even their love affairs.”<sup>96</sup>

After self-government in 1964, these political clinics became institutionalised and truly national in scope—in that citizens from across the colony could attend. First conducted from PUP party premises, an office next to the Supreme Court in Belize City became the permanent site for clinics for most of Price’s career. After the establishment of Belmopan as the new capital in 1970, Price established a second weekly Monday clinic from his official executive office there. Although anyone could also come to these Belmopan clinics, their central geographic location meant that Price was now more regularly accessible to citizens from the western and southern parts of the country. For those who could not afford to come to the national clinics due to distance or cost, Price occasionally took his clinic on the road to every part of the country.<sup>97</sup> Seeing Price to make a request basically meant getting to a clinic and queuing, without the need for an appointment.

Price recalled that at first he ‘helped’ with small amounts of cash from his own official salary and then from a small government stipend that was allocated to all elected representatives for their constituency work.<sup>98</sup> The original intent of this official constituency stipend was to assist elected representatives with the direct administrative costs (such as rent, office supplies and utilities) of meeting constituents to hear concerns and share government developments.<sup>99</sup> However, Price and other representatives used part of this money as handouts to constituents. As this practice expanded, the stipend amount was gradually increased from some \$200 per month per representative in the 1960s to some \$900 in the 1970s.<sup>100</sup> Yet most targeted assistance came directly through existing public service opportunities and through referrals to a vast network of official and private contacts. As Price and other interviewees recollected, one of

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid. Comparing himself to a minister of religion, Price stated that he did give advice on personal relationships.

<sup>97</sup> See Castillo (2002) for personal recollections of these ‘mobile clinics.’ V.S. Naipaul accompanied Price on one of these in 1969 and captured the personal and paternalistic approach of Price well in his book of travel essays (2002: 95-105).

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Price.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with Hector Silva, former minister (pre-independence, 1964-1974), (PUP), 12 January 2011, San Ignacio Town.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

his most popular modes of 'helping' was to write untold numbers of letters of recommendation and to make 'on the spot' phone referrals to cabinet ministers, public officers, business leaders, church leaders and others, who would feel compelled to follow up. A member of Price's first self-government Cabinet, who served until 1974 and received hundreds of such letters, stated: "If the head of government asks you to do something, you'll do it."<sup>101</sup> A review of a sample of these letters reveals that they address a wide variety of resources and services, including appeals for houses, land, jobs, social and educational assistance, business loans and detailed requests as the repair of leaking toilets, fixing water meters and providing fence paint.<sup>102</sup> In addition to being visited at his clinics, Price also received daily letters requesting direct personal assistance, especially from people in communities outside Belize City and Belmopan.

Ministers who served with Price in the pre-independence period recall that, as Premier, he also encouraged other ministers and representatives to follow his example and set up regular clinics for their constituents as a way to monitor and respond to personal needs and to assess the effectiveness of the government's work.<sup>103</sup> Although not with the regularity of Price, some representatives established clinics, especially during election campaigns.<sup>104</sup> In this way, the clinic system gradually began to spread across the nation. However, the weekly Price clinics dominated until independence. So deep was this dominance that some of his own ministers and elected representatives wrote to him or even attended his clinics to follow up on requests from their contacts or constituents.<sup>105</sup> Overall, accounts from Price and other politicians of the period indicate that, even as infrastructure and programmatic developments continued on the road to independence, there was a gradual increase in individualised allocations through these informal mechanisms. In particular, the Price clinics came to be seen as the primary place to get almost any type of need met and problem solved. Some citizens began to believe that to get anything done one had to join lengthy clinic lines to see Price personally. An example, related with some embarrassment, is of a citizen who went to Price (mid-1960s) to request a

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Price kept copies of hundreds of these letters, which are now stored at the GPAC.

<sup>103</sup> Interviews with Silva and Hunter.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

visa to the United States. He said that Price wrote a letter to the US Embassy, but that the letter was neither required nor helpful in his endeavour.<sup>106</sup>

Although predominant, the clinic system was not the only means of dispensing assistance to individual citizens or groups of citizens. Grant (1976: 265-267) illustrated how Price awarded and juggled senior official posts to maintain the personal support of the party elite and how political patronage was becoming “the main determining factor for advancement in the civil service.” Additionally, Price, cabinet ministers and senior government appointees used some of the new powers of their offices to target public resources preferentially. As an example, Moberg (1992: 14), in an examination of the historical development of 1960s village politics in Garifuna and Maya communities in southern Belize, observed that “selective employment in public works projects” was “among the earliest and most divisive forms of patronage administered through village councils nationwide”. These allocation strategies emanated from the central government’s ministries and resembled colonial era work programmes. For instance, Moberg (1991: 222-223) found that, “Aided Self-Help, a works program first introduced in 1963, was ostensibly intended to reinforce village cooperation by providing nominal payment to people who contributed labour to local projects”, but “while politically active supporters of the ruling party [PUP] were well paid for their labour contributions to the program, others received no payment or merely a token amount.”

Moberg’s study also provides some indication of how party-based clientelist activities, apart from the Price clinics, began to spread from Belize City (the capital until 1970) to constituencies across the country. As a retired UDP politician from the northern town of Orange Walk recounted, “This new handout thing got started with the PUP in Belize City” and then “they expanded it to the out districts because it worked in Belize City.”<sup>107</sup> In this regard, he recalled that “In early days, the PUP used sugar quotas in Orange Walk as handouts...they would divide quotas into individual amounts of 50 tons and give them to their people as a way to get support, and the same thing happen in Corozal.”<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Interview with Constituent in OW20, 23 March 2011, Orange Walk Town.

<sup>107</sup> Interview with Rueben Campus, former minister (UDP), 17 March 2011, Orange Walk Town.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.



Although agreeing with this account, a former minister from the pre-independence era added that there were also a small number of powerful patrons apart from Price. In particular, he alleged that Florencio Marin Sr., a powerful Corozal politician and former deputy prime minister, “used his authority as minister of lands to get people to become PUP” with the mantra “You only get land if you join the party.”<sup>109</sup>

### ***Public Allegations and Court Cases of Voter bribery before 1981***

The 10 politicians interviewed who were active in the 1954-1981 period recollect only a small handful of allegations of acts of political clientelism in general, and even fewer of direct voter bribery. A perusal of newspaper stories from this era shows that the allegations cluster around election periods.<sup>110</sup> When these sources are triangulated with information from secondary sources and research at the national court registry, five court cases related to voter bribery were identified. These provide additional insights into the early manifestations of political clientelism. All instances relate to those cases in which prominent incumbent PUP politicians were accused of violating the voter bribery law.

The first court case in modern Belizean history alleging voter bribery was *The Crown vs. Louis Sylvestre* in 1961, just after the general election of March of that year and before internal self-government was achieved. The charge was that Sylvestre, who was appointed Minister of Local Government, Social Services and Cooperatives by Price after the 1961 election, had directed that pens, pencils and small pouches with a nail file and a comb, all inscribed with the words, “Vote for Honourable Louis Sylvestre, PUP All the Way”, be distributed to voters in his constituency just days before the election.<sup>111</sup> Although it is unclear how exactly the case was initiated,<sup>112</sup> Sylvestre was charged and tried in the Supreme Court, under the Representation of the People’s Ordinance (1953), on nine counts of bribing citizens to vote on his

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<sup>109</sup> Interview with Hunter.

<sup>110</sup> The author reviewed a sample of newspapers from the two-week periods before and after the five general elections held between 1961 to 1979..

<sup>111</sup> Minister on Trial in Supreme Court, Sylvestre Charged with Bribery. (1961, July 17). *Daily Clarion*, p. 1.

<sup>112</sup> The court file was not in the Court Registry or the National Archives. It is possible that it was lost in the 1961 hurricane. However, newspaper reports suggest that the British colonial authority, which was still attempting to undermine the Price-led PUP, instructed the police to gather the information required to bring the charges.

behalf in two villages of his Belize Rural South constituency.<sup>113</sup> One reporter called the scheme a “giveaway programme” and insinuated ill intent (Frazer, 1961: 1). The Crown argued that the set of four items given to voters was valued at more than 25 cents and thus over the limit of individual gifts legally allowed, and that the inscription showed deliberate intent to induce voters.<sup>114</sup> The defence did not deny that Sylvestre initiated the distribution of the items, but it argued that these were advertising material—and in any case were not bribes, but gifts valued at less than 25 cents.<sup>115</sup> In July 1961, the jury found Sylvestre not guilty. He was acquitted of all charges in the widely followed case.<sup>116</sup>

The other four cases were all part of a set of election petitions taken up by UDP candidates after their defeat by PUP candidates in the November 1979 general election. In all four cases heard before the Supreme Court in January 1980, the UDP’s allegations were that the PUP candidates had bribed voters and so committed corrupt acts that warranted that their victories be revoked under the revised Representation of the People’s Ordinance (1978).<sup>117</sup> One case was thrown out for lack of proper filing, and another two were dismissed on preliminary objections. In one of these, the allegation was of a \$20 bribery of a voter in Orange Walk.<sup>118</sup> In this set of four cases, the one that received most court time and press coverage was triggered by an election petition against the PUP victor, Jane Usher (a sister of Price), by the losing UDP candidate in the Pickstock constituency, Paul Rodríguez. The petition alleged that Usher “was personally guilty of the corrupt act of bribery” and so had violated the law by giving a voter \$60 and facilitating two loans (in her capacity as manager of a credit union) valued at \$600.<sup>119</sup> The petition was eventually thrown out by the

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<sup>113</sup> Minister on Trial in Supreme Court, Sylvestre Charged with Bribery. (1961, July 17). *Daily Clarion*, p. 1.

<sup>114</sup> Sylvestre Trial Today. (1961, April 11). *Belize Billboard*, p. 1.; Sylvestre Case for Supreme Court. (1961, April 26). *Belize Times*, p. 1.; Sylvestre Trial. (1961, July 18). *Daily Clarion*, p. 1.; Sylvestre Trial. (1961, July 23). *Daily Clarion*, p. 1.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.* Information on financial details supplemented with input from interview with Silva.

<sup>116</sup> Sylvestre Acquitted on all Nine Counts. (1961, July 27). *Belize Times*, p. 1.; Sylvestre Acquitted. (1961, July 27). *Belize Billboard*, p.1.

<sup>117</sup> PUPs Face UDP Election Petitions. (1979, December 22). *The Beacon*, p. 1.; Election Petition Case for January 21. (1980, January 12). *The Beacon*, p. 1.

<sup>118</sup> UDP Loses Elections Case. (1979, December 21). *Amandala*, p. 1.; Supreme Court Squashes UDP Fraud Petitions. (1980, January 20). *Belize Sunday Times*, p. 1.

<sup>119</sup> Rodríguez Accuses Usher of Corrupt Practice. (1980, January 26). *The Beacon*, p. 1.

judge on the assessment that the voter, Norris Garcia, had lied under oath and was therefore not a credible witness.<sup>120</sup>

The relatively small monetary values and petty nature of most of these charges may contribute to explaining why some observers, with the benefit of hindsight, characterise handouts in the pre-independence period as “small fry stuff”<sup>121</sup> and use the labels of ‘innocent’ and ‘benign’. That these pre-1981 allegations reached the Supreme Court at all, and attracted significant public attention, suggest that voter bribery was viewed by many as novel and scandalous. In effect, Belize’s voter bribery laws had been tested. The fact that the cases were all unsuccessful likely illustrated to both political parties and the electorate that legal proof of voter bribery is exceedingly difficult. This difficulty lies largely in the fact that a judge must be able to establish that there is sufficient evidence (from both the alleged bribe-giver and the alleged recipient) that an exchange happened, and that it was intended and received as a bribe. Overall, the five pre-independence court cases support the contention that some politicians in this early period were beginning to actively engage and/or experiment with clientelist practices of dubious legality.

### ***The ‘Helping the People’ Argument***

Price and most other politicians of the pre-independence period justify their early clientelist actions as primarily helping people in need.<sup>122</sup> Price himself, who had always pointed to colonialism as a cause of the colony’s poverty, contended that “there was great human need, we were a poor country, everybody had to help each other” and politicians were there “to help the people.”<sup>123</sup> Disassociating himself from the bribery of voters, he conceded that:

It goes on, it’s a human thing...they came [to my clinics] for help and even tell you that [they will] vote for you if so and so...I have told them, no, you don’t have to do that. So you have to be careful how you do it...don’t let them believe that it is so easy to get, but at the same time you help them.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Gracia Lied Under Oath, (1980, January 25). *Amandala*, p. 1.

<sup>121</sup> Interview with Dean Lindo, first leader of the UDP and former minister, 11 November 2010, Belize City.

<sup>122</sup> Interviews with Price, Hunter and Silva.

<sup>123</sup> Interview with Price. The terms ‘help the people’ or ‘helping’ appear in the Price interview dozens of times.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

A UDP politician active in the post-independence period agreed: “Giving money in those days was not so much to get out votes as to help people.”<sup>125</sup> A retired PUP politician reflected that pre-independence handouts “were minor but always there...as part of campaigning and assisting the people...but also part of what you need to compete and get votes at elections.”<sup>126</sup>

Similarly, an interviewee repeated a popular view in some UDP circles that it was the Price clinics that “opened the flood gates for the entrenchment of patronage politics and now we can’t close the gates.”<sup>127</sup> He added, however, that the clinics also helped “to fill a gap in the formal welfare system.”<sup>128</sup> One political operative suggested that Price used his clinics as a way of monitoring both the mood of the nation and the work of his own ministers.<sup>129</sup> Another assessed that the clinic system was one of the only mechanisms through which people in rural areas accessed resources for their communities and themselves.<sup>130</sup>

Assad Shoman, who joined the PUP in 1974 and served in several ministerial posts, did not think that Price himself “was engaging in the same kind of clientelism or handout politics that we are witnessing today...his was much more a benign version.”<sup>131</sup> He interpreted Price’s ‘helping’ poor people as part of his wider national vision: “Price did not deliberately, purposefully, openly use it as a way of bartering for support...Yes, he would hint that it would be good to support the PUP because it was for independence, because it was for development, but he didn’t have that direct exchange that we have now.”<sup>132</sup> When asked about the 1961 and 1979 legal allegations of bribery, Shoman opined that while Price was “a clean man, not an avaricious man, not a greedy

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<sup>125</sup> Interview with Henry Young Sr., former minister (UDP), 2 November 2010, Belize City.

<sup>126</sup> Interview with Alejandro Vernon, former parliamentarian (pre-independence, various parties), 15 February 2011, Punta Gorda Town.

<sup>127</sup> Interview with John Saldivar, Minister of the Public Service and Governance Reform (UDP), 30 November 2010, Belmopan.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Interview with Stuart Leslie, Chief of Staff for Leader of the Opposition (PUP), 5 November 2010, Belize City.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with Myrtle Palacio, former constituency candidate (PUP) and former Chief Elections Officer, 13 December 2010, Belize City. ‘Constituency candidate’ refers to a person who has won a constituency party convention and has the right to represent a party in a constituency in a general election for the House of Representatives.

<sup>131</sup> Interview with Assad Shoman, former minister (PUP), 7 March 2011, Belize City.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

man, not a thief... some of his ministers were corrupt and Price tolerated some of this in the interest of party unity and the goal of independence.”<sup>133</sup>

UDP Prime Minister Dean Barrow,<sup>134</sup> although agreeing that Price and the PUP planted the seeds for modern political clientelism, argued that:

It was at a very basic level, he [Price] would give a small \$5 or \$10 dollars...but I say that not to be judgemental. It was going to happen anyway...as numbers grew and poverty deepened and conditions became more difficult, it was a natural thing for people to turn to politicians in a more personal way, not so much in terms of fixing my street, improving my infrastructure, do a low-cost housing scheme...but on a daily basis, a personal basis. It was inevitable.<sup>135</sup>

Barrow related this inevitability to the reality of state scale, noting that in a smaller, more personal society, people assess you less on the record of delivery of public goods and that “you [the politician] have to take care of people on a personal basis if you are going to be successful.”<sup>136</sup>

Barrow was among several interviewees who pointed to the contributing factor of small state size. The essence of the argument is made by Duncan and Woods (2007: 209) for the Commonwealth Caribbean: that small size and tiny populations facilitate a familiar form of politics in which “governing and opposition elites know each other personally,” citizens have a high degree of access to political leaders, and patronage is a very attractive political strategy. Indeed, most Belizeans over 50 years of age have stories of some direct personal contact with Price or one of his senior ministers during this pre-independence period. Queuing at clinics in Belize City or Belmopan practically assured one of communicating directly with the leader of the state. Additionally, because the numbers of registered voters in a constituency averaged less than 3,000 before independence, it was possible for politicians to meet and know all their constituents in short order and to win elections by just a couple hundred or even dozens of votes.<sup>137</sup> The pertinent point here is that Belize’s small size and highly personalised politician-citizen relationships increased the relative allure of political clientelism as an electoral strategy for politicians and as a mode of

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Barrow entered electoral politics with the UDP in 1984 and was the Prime Minister (2008- 2012) when this thesis concluded its coverage.

<sup>135</sup> Interview with Prime Minister Dean O. Barrow, 1 April 2011, Belize City.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Meeting all constituents is more difficult but still possible in the geographically larger rural constituencies with less concentrated populations.

informal political participation for citizens. This style of familiar politics also helps to explain the recollections that most politician-citizen mediation in the pre-independence period was handled directly by politicians themselves, and not via permanent brokers.<sup>138</sup>

### ***Ethnicity and Immigration***

Even though immigration from other Central America states (which began in the late 1970s) had not yet become a significant feature in Belize's politics, ethnicity was a factor in how political clientelism emerged. Ethnic majorities in every constituency facilitated self-selection, and then party-selection, of most constituency candidates based on ethnicity. This meant that it was highly likely that voters were represented by candidates of the ethnic majority in their constituency.<sup>139</sup> This, in turn, gave a politically useful multi-ethnic flavor to national party leadership and to the House of Representatives. Also, in the pursuit of national unity in a multi-ethnic state, ethnicity began to factor slowly into how Price and the PUP distributed the more visible spoils of power, such as senior public office positions, land, roads and social assistance funds.<sup>140</sup> The original intent was, in part, to avoid any public perception of favouring one ethnic group over another. However, geographic clustering by ethnicity further facilitated political clientelism by providing politicians with easily definable avenues for communicating with voters and for dispensing resources and favours.<sup>141</sup>

In particular, various circumstances contributed to the Creole ethnic group being most exposed to nascent clientelist practices before independence. The geographic location of the original Price national clinics meant that these were more accessible to urban Belize City residents, where Creoles made up more than three-quarters of the population.<sup>142</sup> Also, Creoles had formed the majority

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<sup>138</sup> As populist and personal as Price was in his politics, the demands on his time caused him to use brokers.

<sup>139</sup> A review of M. Palacio's (1993: 75-96) listing of candidate surnames indicates that the Maya of the Toledo district were the last ethnic group to follow this trend.

<sup>140</sup> As an example, Price's first Cabinet in 1964 included two 'Afro' Creoles, one 'White' Creole, two Mestizos, and a Garifuna.

<sup>141</sup> Premdas (2001: 26) has speculated that the one of the factors explaining the relative lack of ethnically-based political formations in Belize is that "each of the major [ethnic] communities has pre-eminence in its own geographical sphere which limits inter-ethnic contests over power, recognition and resources."

<sup>142</sup> Even after Belmopan became the de jure capital in 1970, Belize City remained the de facto capital for the pre-independence period.

of the workforce in the forestry industry, the collapse of which in the 1950s left working-class Creoles among the most economically vulnerable of Belizeans.<sup>143</sup> Whereas middle-class Creoles already made up the majority of the middle and lower levels of the public service, working-class Creoles competed more intensely for the jobs and handouts that local leaders now had some influence over. For these reasons, Belize City and the urban Creole became more associated with the formative manifestations of political clientelism.

### ***Path Dependence?***

Prime Minister Barrow's view that the development of clientelist politics was inevitable underscores the historical assessment of several interviewees. However, an objective consideration of the motivations behind the emergence of pre-independence political clientelism lies somewhere in the middle of accounts that judge the actions of the PUP and Price as deliberate and damning in the pursuit of political power, and those that excuse them as normal and expected in the struggle for independence. Considering that the PUP was the only political party in government up to 1984, the former view is hardly surprising. Indeed, the record indicates that the roles of the PUP and Price were initially more context-driven than they were pre-mediated or deserving of singular personal or partisan historical blame. The gradual increase in use of individual handouts and favours was one consequence of the inability of new middle-class political leaders to maintain working-class voter support by adequately meeting socio-economic needs through the formal programmatic approaches. The fact that the new parties and politicians were still operating in a colonial context, in which much still depended on the financial support of the British, cannot be discounted as a factor in the failure to meet needs—and, therefore, in the use of clientelist handouts and patronage to appease an impatient electorate. Belize's small size and the highly personal style of the charismatic Price certainly contributed to the emergence of individualised politician-citizen relations and the clinic system. Price's populism and his desire to help people—which came in part from his priestly vocation and his early experience in dealing with clients for Turton—were further contributing factors.

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<sup>143</sup> See Grant (1976: 98-117 and 198) for a discussion of the historical economic roles of the Creole population.

Undoubtedly there was some point at which Price and the PUP began to leverage the potential electoral advantage of this informal option, the eventual result being a gradual blurring of two lines: that of personal handouts as primarily “helping”, with that of exchanging them as inducements for political support. As one politician from the period summarised, “remember what the term ‘handout’ means...from my hand to yours and you owe me something personal...a vote is expected.”<sup>144</sup> Moreover, the constitutional achievements of universal adult suffrage and self-government, which had given politicians new electoral power and greater control over resource allocation, gave citizens an added bargaining tool (the vote) in negotiating influence with their political leaders. In this regard, Shoman (1987: 32) argued: “In the case of the PUP in government...many from the working-class would offer their unflinching [political] allegiance in the expectation that they would personally be accorded certain material benefits—a job, a house, a piece of land, a scholarship, and even a recommendation.” But he added that, “The clientele or patronage system, which won the PUP the support of members of the middle class as well as the working class, also served to swell ranks of the opposition, since there was simply not enough to go around” (Shoman, 1987: 32). Indeed, it was not long before the opposition party itself gradually began to give small handouts to constituents as an added tactic to compete against the PUP’s electoral dominance.<sup>145</sup>

Dean Lindo, the first leader of the UDP, told of an incident in his constituency in the 1979 elections when a voter came up to him and said that “Musa [Lindo’s opponent] gave me \$10. If you give me \$15, I’ll vote for you.”<sup>146</sup> He recalled that in pre-independence elections the UDP only used this tactic in a limited way “because we did not have money...or we would have done more of it.”<sup>147</sup> Thus he insinuated that the UDP would have gone along a similar path as the PUP in similar historical and political circumstances—with or without Price. Manuel Esquivel, UDP co-founder and Belize’s second prime minister, contended that

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<sup>144</sup> Interview with Vernon.

<sup>145</sup> The interviews show that in this pre-independence period, the UDP’s sources of funding were largely personal funds and small private donations from individuals and businesses.

<sup>146</sup> Interview with Lindo.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.



the pre-independence manifestations of handout politics were likely negligible before 1973 because the NIP was never a credible competitive alternative to the PUP.<sup>148</sup> However, he believed that UDP electoral advances in 1974 and 1979 “scared the PUP...into using more tactics of patronage to win future elections.”<sup>149</sup> Although it is most likely that the UDP would have eventually employed clientelist tactics if it were in government before independence, the unbroken PUP victories before independence—and Price’s longevity—accelerated the rate at which the PUP evolved into a clientelist party.

### ***The State of Play circa 1980/81***

At the time of the last pre-independence general election in 1979, the PUP had been in power for a quarter century, the population was nearing 145,000, the Guatemala claim still lingered and the economy was beginning another downslide triggered by the global recession and depressed sugar prices. After capturing 38.1 per cent of the vote in the 1974 elections and winning its largest number of House seats to date (six seats, compared to 12 for the PUP), the electoral competitiveness of the UDP had continued to improve (M. Palacio, 1993: 10), with significant victories in the 1978 Belize City municipal elections and in the majority of municipalities across the country. Indeed, the UDP felt highly confident about its 1979 chances and campaigned on the position of national security and national development before independence,<sup>150</sup> on allegations of PUP patronage abuses and with the theme ‘time for a change’. However, the PUP, which appealed to voters to stay united for independence, was once again victorious, polling 51.8 per cent of the vote (to 46.8 per cent for the UDP).

Interviewees who contested or participated in some manner in the 1979 election generally agreed that outright requests for individual handouts were still outweighed by those relating to collective needs such as job creation, housing, education, streets and support for agricultural projects. Yet clientelist politics was on the rise. Based on the nine tracer markers (identified to track changes in

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<sup>148</sup> Interview with Sir Manuel Esquivel, former UDP prime minister (1984-1989 and 1993-1998), 18 November 2010, Belmopan.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> A key plank of the UDP’s position was that the British should settle the Guatemala claim before independence. See Shoman (1987: 35-36) for an analysis of the 1979 election results.

clientelism between 1980 and 2011) this sub section profiles clientelist practices circa 1980/81.

### **Numbers and Geographical Spread of Political Clinics**

Interviewees indicate that, apart from the two weekly Price clinics in Belize City and Belmopan, only a handful of representatives, mostly ministers of government, held clinics with any degree of regularity in the 1970s. Except for the Price clinics, most clinic activity clustered around election campaigns proper. By 1980, however, a few other politicians had begun to operate other political clinics, albeit irregularly. A handful of UDP opposition candidates also had constituency offices, which can be viewed as emerging clinics, in operation in the few weeks just before elections. Overall, political clinics were few in number and largely temporary in operation.

### **Numbers and Profiles of Clients**

Politicians of the time indicate that they kept or saved no records of numbers of citizens visiting their clinics, and so it is not possible to assess accurately the proportion of total constituents who participated then. However, some trends can be deduced. Because they served the entire nation, the Price clinics were always overflowing and waiting times were generally long. Although national in scope, they were based in Belize City and Belmopan and so inaccessible for many. The proportion of the entire voting population that actually visited a Price clinic was likely modest and generally urban-based. Indications are that even as this percentage was gradually increasing, most people still expected a 'start' through programmatic approaches rather than a handout. In short, attending a political clinic was still more occasional than habitual in 1980. Even as clientelist politician-citizen relationships had begun to spread to other towns and rural areas, it was still concentrated in Belize City (urban)—and so mostly Creole in client profile. Indications from interviewees are strong that, although the majority of citizens visiting the Price clinics were poor, citizens in the middle and business classes also participated.

### **Types and Volume of Goods and Services Going to Clients**

Although the numbers of each type of goods and services provided are difficult to estimate accurately for 1980, the types themselves are clear. Price's letters

and information from other politicians active during the period indicate that the major individual requests were for jobs, agricultural land, house lots, house construction and repairs, healthcare and educational assistance, and microcredit, as well as small amounts of money for basic daily needs. In terms of cash exchanges, the amounts requested and given were largely to supplement other income rather than to take responsibility for most needs. The amounts ranged from cents to rarely above \$10 to \$15. No politician interviewed could remember paying an individual's entire utility bill or paying constituents' bills on a monthly basis. Overall, handouts to voters were mostly confined to campaign periods and to special times of the year.

### **Monetary Value of Goods and Services Going to Clients**

The monetary value of handouts around this last pre-independence election is also difficult to assess. What is known is that, without the expense of radio and television advertising, the costs of election campaigns proper were relatively low. A retired politician recalled that his last election in 1974 cost \$2,000;<sup>151</sup> a campaign manager noted that the 1979 campaign in the Collet constituency cost \$5,000;<sup>152</sup> and a candidate in a Belize Rural constituency in 1979 revealed that his campaign cost under \$10,000.<sup>153</sup> In 1979, cash payments to party supporters for campaigning were almost unheard of in both political parties. On the contrary, many citizens actually made financial donations to their parties and candidates, providing most food, drinks and advertising supplies.<sup>154</sup> However, as illustrated by the Price clinics, a small number of politicians were giving handouts and doing favours for voters between elections.

### **Types of Political Support going to Politicians**

Apart from beginning to barter their votes, it can be deduced from politicians' accounts that those voters who participated in clientelist exchanges also proved their political support through party membership, volunteering for party activities such as campaigning, posting campaign posters at their homes and participating in public partisan rallies. For instance, one key informant noted that

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<sup>151</sup> Interview with Silva.

<sup>152</sup> Interview with Eamon Courtenay, senator and former minister (PUP), 23 November 2010, Belize City.

<sup>153</sup> Interview with Hunter.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with Carlos Santos, former constituency aspirant (PUP), 1 March 2011, Belmopan; and interview with Shoman. 'Constituency aspirant' refers to a person seeking to represent a party in a general election by winning the constituency convention.

the most popular request in the Collet constituency (south-side Belize City) in 1979 was actually for PUP campaign posters to put on houses to show support for the party.<sup>155</sup> However, because a significant proportion of the population at the time was still basing political support for the PUP or UDP on national and issue-based party positions,<sup>156</sup> many voters would have used similar means of expressing support for the party and candidates they favoured, based on party-based policy differences. In particular, almost all campaign and other support work for both the PUP and UDP was done voluntarily, without expectation of a payment.

### **Extent of Distribution of Public Resources for Party/Clientelist Purposes**

Although politicians of the time indicate that their clinic and campaign costs were partly self-financed or from small private donations,<sup>157</sup> the record outlined above indicates that the practice of allocating public resources with partisan overtones was increasing by 1980. Not only were elected representatives already receiving monthly constituency stipends that were being re-directed as monetary handouts to constituents, but the practice of dispensing public sector resources and favours to citizens through partisan clinics and partisan contacts was becoming more common and more national in scope. For example, a key informant attributed the PUP's 1979 electoral success and increased margin of victory in Collet in part to the popularity of a major new low-cost housing development.<sup>158</sup>

### **Ratio of Permanent/Temporary Public Service Jobs**

Public service jobs, although not yet under the full control of the PUP government, were in high demand, and letters of recommendation from Price and other ministers to senior public officers carried much weight in this regard. In 1980/1981, public service jobs numbered 1,736<sup>159</sup> (Ministry of the Public Service, 1981: Appendix A) and made up a significant proportion of the national workforce. Even though there was some partisan influence over who got certain

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<sup>155</sup> Interview with Courtenay.

<sup>156</sup> For example, the PUP could still rally huge crowds around the issue of independence, and the UDP around the issue of the Guatemala threat.

<sup>157</sup> Interviews with Silva, Hunter, Vernon and Shoman.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with Courtenay. As indicated earlier, it cannot be assumed that decisions on the distribution of such public resources as housing were totally based on merit.

<sup>159</sup> This figure did not include teachers, who were already considered 'private' under Belize's church/state education system.

jobs, hiring was generally done by established process and through the filling of permanent posts. Although temporary worker categories already existed, they were not significantly exploited for job patronage. Circa 1981, at the most two of every 100 public service jobs were in the 'open vote' temporary category, and the regulations on public service hiring were strictly applied.<sup>160</sup>

#### **Extent of References to Clientelism in News Stories and Public Documents**

Before independence, the number of news stories on political clientelism activities was negligible and largely restricted to reporting on court cases. The Belize-specific literature review identified no scholarly studies or reports with a particular focus on pre-independence political clientelism. As noted, however, scholars such as Grant (1976), Bolland (1988, 1991), Shoman (1987, 1990), Moberg (1991, 1992) and Macpherson (2003, 2007) have made passing references to patronage and clientelism in their various academic contributions to the study of Belize's pre-independence politics.

#### **Number of Alleged Cases of Voter bribery Taken to Court**

Five court cases alleging voter bribery were identified in the period between 1961 and 1979—indicating a respectful wariness about sections of the electoral law that made voter bribery illegal. Because none of these five cases led to a conviction, both politicians and voters were becoming cognizant of the relative ease of breaking the voter bribery law.

On the whole, this state-of-play summary illustrates that in 1980/81 aspects of pre-independence politician-party relationships (although still in a formative stage) met the definition of political clientelism adopted for this study. By their own accounts, politicians were beginning to provide or promise a variety of discretionary resources and favours to citizens with some expectation of voter support. Additionally, citizens were beginning to access this 'new' and informal clientelist option with the knowledge that their political support was expected.

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<sup>160</sup> Personal communication with Marian McNab, CEO, Ministry of the Public Service, 6 February 2013; and Interview with Gibson.

## **A Bridging Decade: 1981 to circa 1991**

From a historical and comparative viewpoint, the first decade after independence was largely one of slow transition in the trajectory of political clientelism as political leaders and citizens adapted to independent-state status, and as political parties sought to find new identities and develop new strategies for winning even more competitive elections. As such, it can be construed as a short but important formative bridge from the pre-independence phase of the emergence of party-based clientelism to the phase of intense expansion of clientelist practices that would follow in the 1990s. This section identifies the substantive elements of this bridging phase.

### ***Key Changes in the Country Context***

Economically, Belize's birth as a new nation coincided with the global recession of the late 1970s and early 1980s, which contributed to the worse macroeconomic performance since the collapse of the forestry industry in the middle of the twentieth century. By 1984, after registering a gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate below one per cent in 1982 and huge budget deficits, Belize entered a belt-tightening stand-by agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) (Vernon, 1992: 44). Belize's population increased from 145,343 in 1980 to 189,392 in 1990, representing a 30.3 per cent increase in intercensal population growth, compared to 21.3 per cent in the 1970s (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2007: 13-15). Social sector spending freezes, triggered by the recession and the stand-by agreement, tied the hands of governments seeking to deliver the national and human development that independence had promised to bring. The harsh socio-economic conditions contributed to a (1970s-1980s) wave of economic emigration of an estimated 20,000-30,000 Belizeans, mostly Creoles and mostly to the United States (Vernon, 1990: 8).<sup>161</sup> At the same time, an estimated 30,000 political and economic migrants were flooding into Belize from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, further taxing the already stretched institutions and services of the new state (J. Palacio, 1995: 82). These mostly Latino immigrants also contributed to increased population growth and could eventually become new

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<sup>161</sup> Vernon (1990: 34) estimated that by the late 1980s some 60,000-70,000 Belizeans were in the United States after over three decades of sustained emigration.

voters in the 1990s.<sup>162</sup> Along with the easing of the global economic recession, increasing foreign investment, grant support from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and some further diversification of the national economy, the IMF adjustments contributed to improving fiscal and GDP performance by 1989 (Gomez, 2007: 5). Importantly, it was in the 1980s that Belize began to adopt the neoliberal economic policies that would gradually decrease the 'size' of the state and influence its capacity to address social problems.<sup>163</sup>

Key political system changes in the independence constitution included an expansion of the number of seats in the House from 18 to 28, the consolidation of the Senate, and the establishment of the British monarch as the Head-of-State (represented locally by an appointed Governor-General). Importantly, independence gave Belizean governments' total control over the remaining activities not yet fully transferred under self-government—namely in national security, foreign affairs, fiscal matters and the public service. Another major step along the road of consolidating formal democracy occurred in the 1984 general election when the first and seamless change of party in government further consolidated the Westminster system. In that first post-independence election, the UDP won for the first time, with over 53.3 per cent of the vote and a 'supermajority'<sup>164</sup> of 21 of 28 House seats, under the leadership of Esquivel (M. Palacio, 1993: 10). Price himself lost his constituency seat in the UDP landslide. Most assessments of the PUP loss in 1984 point to the PUP being a 'tired' party without new ideas after 30 years in power, with an ideologically divided leadership and an inability to step up development programmes sufficiently due to the hard economic times.<sup>165</sup> It was indeed a 'change' election. The 'full' arrival of the UDP as the 'other' political party further consolidated Belize's two-party Westminster model, heightened the competitive level of party

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<sup>162</sup> Before being able to register to become voters, the new immigrants needed to attain Belizean citizenship after a period of residency. As such, their effect on the 1984 and 1989 elections was still minimal. However, accusations of using immigrants for electoral advantage began before the 1984 elections when the UDP criticised the PUP government's refugee and immigration policies as too liberal and aimed at 'Latinising' the electorate (Premdas, 2001: 29).

<sup>163</sup> The term 'neoliberal' is used here to refer to economic policies that promote more open markets and private investment, less government regulation, privatisation and freer trade.

<sup>164</sup> 'Supermajority' refers to a greater than two-thirds or three-fourths majority in the House, which allows for constitutional amendments without the support of opposition members.

<sup>165</sup> See, for example, the assessment by Shoman (1987: 36-37).

politics and launched a period (1984-2003) of the PUP and UDP alternating in power.

With independence no longer a national issue and with a defence guarantee secured from the United Kingdom in case of a military threat from Guatemala, the political parties were losing their traditional and distinctive policy profiles. For a short period up to the 1989 general election, there were some serious intra-party debates about ideology and development visions. For its part, the UDP had long been clear that it was 'right of centre' and decidedly free enterprise and anti-communist in orientation, and it governed as such in the 1984-1989 term. The PUP, although never publicly against capitalism, had working-class origins, and Price had tried to cast the PUP as a progressive party that strived for a 'mixed economy'.<sup>166</sup> After a brief and failed attempt by left-wing elements to win control after the 1984 elections, the PUP started to present itself as a centrist and business-friendly party. When the PUP was returned to power in 1989, it embraced—and then expanded—on the UDP's free-enterprise model and policies. In this period, party politics in Belize continued to develop in such a manner that no one party dominated in terms of geographic, class or ethnic advantage. As argued by well-known Belizean newspaper publisher, Evan X Hyde (2011b),<sup>167</sup> "The two-party system played a major role...politicians from different ethnicities and administrative districts have to work together over long periods of time to establish the national credibility a political party requires in order to win elections". Consequently, the PUP and the UDP, without any strong distinguishing national visions, continued to consolidate identities as multi-class, multi-racial, multi-gender and multi-ethnic parties, and they received support from all these groupings across urban and rural communities.

Another relevant change in the country context was the significant spike in the number and scope of work of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the last half of the 1980s. Byrd (2003) related this growth to the greater availability of international development funding and found that by the turn of the decade,

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<sup>166</sup> This summary of ideological developments is based largely on Shoman (1987 and 1993), and on this author's interviews with politicians.

<sup>167</sup> It is not always possible to give page numbers for quotations retrieved from online newspapers. However, the relevant Uniform Resource Locator (URL) is listed in the bibliographic entry.



NGOs, community groups and charity groups were working in all districts of Belize and in almost every thematic area, including community development, political reform and social policy.<sup>168</sup> These organisations were beginning to help fill economic and social development gaps left by state institutions, and also to provide Belizeans with additional alternative opportunities to participate and receive benefits outside of political party relationships.

### ***Political Clientelism in the 1980s***

After independence in 1981 and in the lead up to the PUP's first loss in 1984, Price's weekly political clinics continued unabated and the clinic practice continued to spread slowly at the constituency level.<sup>169</sup> For instance, a review of inter-ministerial communications (IMC) from this period, although showing that the types of requests remained similar, indicates a further institutionalisation of clientelism in the first decade of independence. Representative examples from the GPAC include:

- Letter from Price to Minister of Lands Briceño requesting house lots be allocated to 16 specific citizens in Belize City.<sup>170</sup>
- Minister of Housing Shoman to Price requesting assistance for \$10,000 housing loan for a constituent.<sup>171</sup>
- Price to Deputy Minister for Housing Usher requesting assistance to procure a house for an individual.<sup>172</sup>
- High school principal to Price requesting paint.<sup>173</sup>
- Citizen to Price requesting help with loudspeakers for an event.<sup>174</sup>
- Price to Shoman requesting repair of a roof.<sup>175</sup>
- Price to Minister of Energy Briceño requesting action on a complaint that a utility bill is too high.<sup>176</sup>
- Price to Attorney-General Courtenay requesting assessment of prospect of reducing the length of a prison sentence.<sup>177</sup>
- Price to Minister of Sports Musa requesting that an individual be given a job.<sup>178</sup>
- Price to housing agency requesting that a loan be written off for individual.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Bryd showed that the spate of new CSOs was partly related to 'new' international development financing triggered by independence and to the investments in the NGO sector made by USAID.

<sup>169</sup> Interviews with Price and Hunter.

<sup>170</sup> IMC, Price to Marin 20 May 1982.

<sup>171</sup> IMC, Shoman to Price, 5 June 1981

<sup>172</sup> IMC, Price to Usher 29 January 1981.

<sup>173</sup> Letter, Carlos Castillo, Principal, Wesley College to Price, 3 October 1980.

<sup>174</sup> Letter, John Bo to Price, 1 October 1980.

<sup>175</sup> IMC, Price to Shoman 22 November 1984.

<sup>176</sup> IMC, Price to Briceño, 6 November 1984.

<sup>177</sup> IMC, Price to Courtenay, 8 November 1984.

<sup>178</sup> IMC, Price to Musa 20 November 1984.

<sup>179</sup> IMC, Price to Reconstruction and Development Corporation, 10 December 1984.

It is interesting, but not surprising, that most historical assessments of the first PUP loss make no direct link to the possibility that macro-economic constraints in the first three years of independence restricted the PUP's opportunities to maintain or expand its clientelist appeals to the electorate. Nor was this possibility mentioned in any of the interviews conducted for this study. Although not making a direct connection in this regard, Shoman (1987: 36-37) argued that the economic crisis "caused significant loss of support for the PUP" because it was unable to maintain its land reform and infrastructure development programmes, especially in rural parts of the country. Based on the aforementioned examples of party-based patronage related to such government programmes, the diminished clientelist opportunities was likely at least one of the contributing factors in the change of government in 1984.

Overall, accounts from politicians interviewed for this study paint a picture of a gradual but not dramatic increase in clientelist activity in the UDP's first term of office (1984-1989). Importantly, the stint in government gave the UDP its first experience of the many challenges and advantages of incumbency in terms of the distribution of public resources and favours. Esquivel recalled that after the election and on becoming prime minister (1984), "I was unbelievably naive to be surprised that campaign volunteers began coming to collect, saying...we helped you to win so we deserve something."<sup>180</sup> Esquivel, albeit never as natural a clientelist politician as Price, continued the Price tradition of holding a weekly Wednesday national clinic at his office in Belmopan and occasionally in Belize City.<sup>181</sup> The use of political clinics by other UDP politicians expanded slowly, but they were still clustered around election campaigns. Esquivel recounted that in the late 1980s most handouts were in-kind and that monetary gifts were still quite rare.<sup>182</sup> A UDP political insider supported this view: "After its first election the UDP had tasted power and the flow of public money...by 1989 there was vote-influencing...not so much with money then, but more so with government resources like land lots and land leases."<sup>183</sup> Esquivel estimated that the

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<sup>180</sup> Interview with Esquivel.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> Interview with Robert Pennell, former constituency campaign manager (UDP), 8 February 2011, Punta Gorda Town.

constituency stipend had increased to circa \$3,000 and that the cost of a constituency campaign was circa \$15,000-\$20,000 by the end of 1990.<sup>184</sup>

Although 'helping' was still seen as the primary motive for handouts by politicians, other changes in the political context did affect the evolving relationships between politicians and citizens. An important development, highlighted by several interviewees, was that the late 1980s was the time when 'big money' began to trickle slowly into Belize's political parties. This had some direct relationship to the spread of neoliberal economic policies during this decade. On the demand side, Esquivel related the increase of money in politics in part to the advent of television and expanded radio advertising in Belizean politics.<sup>185</sup> However, in addition to the growing costs of campaigns, parties and politicians also began to spend more on improving the organisation of national and constituency canvassing and on particularistic appeals to voters. This was especially noteworthy in a handful of precedent-setting constituencies. One that was singled out frequently by interviewees was the 1984 campaign of the young business man Derek Aikman, who had dealt Price his first general election defeat. As former Prime Minister Said Musa (1998-2008) noted, "There was the Aikman phenomenon...he took campaigning to another level of glitz, propaganda, communications, organisation...and money, and to compete, others followed that lead."<sup>186</sup> Several interviewees also pointed to the 1984 'big money' contest in the Queen's Square constituency of newcomer Dean Barrow, who was financially supported by one of Belize's richest local businessmen at the time,<sup>187</sup> in a contest against a wealthy PUP newcomer and businessman, Ralph Fonseca.

Ralph Fonseca, who was defeated by Barrow in 1984, went on to win in another constituency in 1989 and became one of the main architects of the re-branding of the PUP in his capacity as national campaign manager.<sup>188</sup> Fonseca noted that he had come away from his 1984 loss with the lesson that "people don't

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<sup>184</sup> Interview with Esquivel.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid. Amendments to restrictive colonial broadcasting laws contributed to the rapid expansion of television and radio media in the 1980s.

<sup>186</sup> Interview with Said Musa, parliamentarian, former prime minister (1998-2008) and former party leader (PUP), 26 November 2010, Belize City.

<sup>187</sup> Interview with Barrow.

<sup>188</sup> Fonseca served as PUP campaign manager from 1987 to 2008 and had great influence on the financial management of the party and, when the PUP was in power, of the country.

care what you know until they know that you care” [i.e., by delivering targeted resources and favours], and he set out to create a business-model national party machine.<sup>189</sup> Fonseca attested that he had observed how modern political parties operated and campaigned while studying and living in Canada, and he applied some of these basic business principles to the PUP. Former Prime Minister Musa, another architect of the new PUP, recounted that, “After independence we could not identify clear aspirations that grabbed people’s minds...before it was freedom...how can you top that?”<sup>190</sup> A senior political operative contended that a key aspect of the re-branding was the deliberate “paradigm shift to a new PUP political strategy in which a more centrist and capitalist approach was accompanied by more money in campaigns and the move from volunteerism to payments...and one result was that street campaigning began a shift from ‘what does your constituency need?’ to ‘what do you want?’”<sup>191</sup> Expressing similar views, another senior PUP operative marked the 1989 election as the political moment the PUP “stopped being a movement and began its transition to a commercial entity.”<sup>192</sup>

With the gradual diminishing of distinguishing party identities and visions in an increasingly competitive electoral context, both parties also had added incentive to raise more private money to strengthen and expand particularistic politician-citizen relationships. This not only facilitated the entry of more wealthy candidates into electoral politics, but also led to both parties competing to make larger appeals to big business for donations. As the first party leader of the UDP reflected, “Handout politics did start to grow in the 1980s as more money flowed in and as the electorate realised that they could get more out of the game.”<sup>193</sup> And even though volunteering for parties continued, payment of party and campaign workers was creeping into party operations. For example, one interviewee informed that during the national re-registration of voters that transpired in 1988-1989, PUP party workers were paid per head for the number of voter application forms completed, and he added that this helped to “fuel the

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<sup>189</sup> Interview with Ralph Fonseca, former minister and former national campaign manager (PUP), 31 March 2011, Belize City.

<sup>190</sup> Interview with Musa.

<sup>191</sup> Interview with Leslie.

<sup>192</sup> Interview with Courtenay.

<sup>193</sup> Interview with Lindo.

payment culture” that later became the norm.<sup>194</sup> By the time 1989 general election campaign commenced, it was rather clear that any hopes that may have existed that the first change of government would break the precedent of gradually expanding clientelist politics were all but dashed.

### ***The UDP Sets Some Precedents***

Indeed, in addition to continuing the practice of weekly clinics, expanding the monthly constituency stipends to representatives and continuing party-based patronage with government resources and programmes, it was under the 1984-1989 UDP government that three other specific developments occurred that affected the future evolution of political clientelism. The first development raised the bar for the open use of publicly funded resources for targeted programmes by an incumbent political party before a general election. In the year leading up to the 4 September 1989 election, the UDP government launched a large ‘community development projects’ programme, in which each of the then 28 constituencies was targeted for the allocation of a portion of the funds (Coye, Swift, Ermeav, and Lopez, 1990).<sup>195</sup> Although the exact budget allocated is disputed (the opposition PUP alleged it was over \$8,000,000), the records of the House of Representatives (Hansard, 1989), shows that \$1,800,000 of Capital II funds was allocated for small constituency projects, such as electrification, water supply, streets and drainage, and housing.<sup>196</sup> The opposition PUP accused the UDP of using public funds for its campaign and alleged that accounting officers in the public service were either being by-passed or pressured by UDP candidates to break accounting rules.<sup>197</sup>

The post-election Commission of Inquiry (appointed by the PUP government) into the use of the funds opined that “the community development funds were driven primarily by a political agenda at the expense of public accountability for expenditures borne by taxpayers” (Coye, et al., 1990: 1-2). Even as it conceded that some funds were used for targeted community-level projects such as road

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<sup>194</sup> Interview with Courtenay.

<sup>195</sup> This refers only to the executive summary of the Report of Commission of Inquiry. The full report was never publicly released.

<sup>196</sup> This is the amount that the then prime minister, Esquivel, recollected as accurate (Personal communication with Manuel Esquivel, 2 May and 15 May 2012). At \$1,800,000 the average total per constituency would have been circa \$65,000.

<sup>197</sup> UDP Uses Public Funds for Campaign. (1989, April 6). *Belize Times*. p. 1, A.

works in the constituencies, the Commission claimed to have unearthed evidence of significant misappropriation and waste. Esquivel, the prime minister at the time, strongly refuted all allegations of misappropriation and insisted that no funds were allocated directly through UDP candidates.<sup>198</sup> However, the allocation of funds via established public sector channels does not negate the possibility of direct influence (by politicians) over which particular group or individuals are targeted within a constituency.

The second key development relates to amendments made to election laws that would have significant implications for the management of future elections in general, and for the control of political clientelism, specifically. A 1988 constitutional amendment (No. 26 of 1988) allowed the majority party to appoint three members, including the chair, and for the Opposition to appoint two members of the Elections and Boundaries Commission (EBC), effectively giving the party in power majority control of the five-member EBC.<sup>199</sup> Further legal changes in 1989 shifted the power of staff appointment from the EBC to the public service, and re-established the formerly autonomous EBC secretariat as a regular department within a government ministry (M. Palacio, 2010: 4-7). In effect, the amendments split the responsibility for election management into two bodies, both of which could be directly controlled by the incumbent party. A key consequence would be that incumbent parties now had added legal cover to influence election administration—a part of which is to investigate allegations of voter bribery. As Palacio (2010: 6) argued, “Instead of more autonomy for the election management body, its relative independence was literally snuffed.”

The third key development likely seemed at the time totally unrelated to political clientelism. Michael Ashcroft, British billionaire and international investor, had made one of his first major investments in Belize with the purchase of the Belize branch of the Royal Bank of Canada in 1987 (Ashcroft, 2009: 52).<sup>200</sup> By 1990, he had negotiated a 30-year tax holiday from a newly elected PUP government

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<sup>198</sup> Personal communication with Sir Manuel Esquivel.

<sup>199</sup> Prior to the amendment, appointments to the five-member Elections and Boundaries Commission and of the Chief Elections Officer were made by the Governor-General and there was no allowance for political parties appointees.

<sup>200</sup> Ashcroft (2009: 52) stated that his “business interests in Belize began in 1987” when he bought this bank and renamed it the Belize Bank. However, it is not clear if he had other business investments in Belize at this time. Ashcroft was appointed to the United Kingdom’s House of Lords (as life peer) in 2000.

for all his current and future business interests in Belize, which he placed under the umbrella of Belize Holdings Inc (Ashcroft, 2009: 52).<sup>201</sup> The salient point here is that it was around this time (the early 1990s) that Ashcroft's role as the single largest financial contributor to both Belize's major political parties (Smith, 2011: 289), and, by extension, his over-sized and controversial role as a major contributor of private funds to the parties' clientelist operations, was beginning.

The UDP's introductory foray into clientelist politics during its first term in government did not forestall an exceedingly close victory by a re-branded and combative 'new' PUP in 1989. The PUP, which was not short of financing, had run a modern and well-managed campaign marked by persistent accusations of UDP corruption and aloofness. It won 15 of the 28 House of Representative seats with just 50 per cent of the popular vote, compared to the UDP's 48.2 per cent (M. Palacio, 1993: 10). Reflecting on the UDP failure, a UDP minister opined that, "One reason we lost the 1989 elections was because we did not do enough benefits politics...and we could have."<sup>202</sup> Overall, the 1989 election marked a turning-point, but not yet a sea change, in the trajectory of political clientelism. As former prime minister Musa stated, by 1989, "The era of 'bashments' and of more open financial incentives for voter participation was beginning".<sup>203</sup>

As significant as these developments were, most politicians of both parties, making comparisons to later years, still view the 1980s as a time when offers and requests for handouts were still minimal. Apart from the national clinics, most clinics were still clustered around elections campaigns. If client numbers grew, it was only marginally. The types of goods and services remained basically the same, even though the amounts of money spent on clientelist operations had continued to grow. Party membership, volunteering as canvassers, attending party rallies and wearing party colours were still dominant as ways of manifesting support for a political party. On the other hand, several politicians suggest that the parties had both become more adept at using public resources, including jobs, as clientelist rewards and inducements. Yet, even as

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<sup>201</sup> Belize Holdings Inc was subsequently renamed Carlisle Holdings.

<sup>202</sup> Interview with Saldivar.

<sup>203</sup> Interview with Musa. 'Bashments' refers to lavish partisan public events, usually with free food and drinks, raffles and various kinds of handouts.

allegations of corruption by the two parties increased, few news reports made the direct connection to clientelism and no case of voter bribery was brought to the courts in this bridging decade.

## **Conclusion**

Because the British colonial authorities also employed a form of clientelism, it is perhaps useful to distinguish the post-1950s period, when political parties had been formed and elected local political leaders had gained control of most public allocation institutions, as 'modern' political clientelism. Although 21 September 1981 marked the commencement of the Independence Constitution of Belize, the political system had been largely in place since self-government in 1964. Yet it was not until independence that Belizeans became fully responsible for the system they inherited and for all the powers and the problems of the new state. Ironically, as much as the institutionalisation of elections based on universal suffrage, the emergence of party politics and the control of public resources by local leaders were critical prerequisites for the consolidation of formal democracy, they were also essential for the rooting of modern political clientelism.

After early attempts at programmatic approaches to address deep-seated social inequities and maintain broad-based voter support proved inadequate, the PUP slowly began to integrate clientelist practices into its repertoire of party strategies. The personalised, populist and paternalistic style of Price, in the context of Belize's small territorial size and tiny population, was a key, but not essential, contributing factor to the emergence of particularised politician-citizen relationships. Diverse multi-ethnicity, although not a direct causal factor, was beginning to add a unique Belizean flavour to the bargaining among politicians, communities and citizens for the distribution of public resources. However, the primary and driving independent variables in this formative period were the consolidation of increasingly competitive party politics and the continuing reality of unmet livelihood needs of a significant proportion of the Belizean people. The inherited social and welfare institutions of the emerging, but still colonial, state were simply unable to meet most people's needs and expectations. As the opposition UDP improved its electoral performance and slowly entered the



handout game, the PUP stepped up its direct appeals to individual voters and communities through the clinic system and through the targeted allocation of public goods. By the time of independence, more Belizeans (mostly, but not only, from the working class) were beginning to figure out that their new voting power could be used for more than supporting a party based on its positions on national causes and policies.

In the first post-independence decade of the 1980s, full national control of resource allocation, partisan alternation in government, more vulnerable economic conditions, significant immigration and an expanding population favoured the growth of political clientelism. On the other hand, the immediate imperatives of the hard new socio-economic and political challenges of independence, the temporary 'escape valves' of financial stabilisation and of emigration to the United States, and the alternatives for participation provided by CSOs, collectively represented a temporary counter-weight. Importantly, by the end of the decade, the PUP and UDP had begun to espouse near-identical national positions on most major issues, to devise new tactics for utilising public funds to dispense targeted goods and to attract larger sums of private money. Overall, developments in this decade bridged the pre-independence phase and the period of pervasive political clientelism that was to follow.

With the benefit of hindsight, the early manifestations of political clientelism were indeed limited and often quaint. However, in poor emerging democracies with increasingly competitive politics, the line between providing handouts and favours to help citizens and deliberately influencing individual voters is often blurry in both conceptual and practical terms. By independence in September 1981 and more so a decade later in 1991, handouts and favours in return for political support were both more on offer and more needed. In the terms of the resource flows depicted in Figure 2, clientelist flows (red arrows) were still ad hoc and restrained. Yet the political pendulum was beginning to sway from more programmatic government-citizen relationships (blue arrows) to a situation in which there was growing, but still limited, elements of informal and targeted clientelist exchanges between politicians and citizens. By 1991, and despite a good early record of formal democracy, it was becoming clear that this

pendulum swing was not just a momentary growing pain of state formation that would quickly wither away, but a persistent and growing aspect of Belize's experience with democracy.

# CHAPTER 2

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## **THE RAMPANT PHASE OF CLIENTELIST POLITICS: Circa 1992 to 2011**

### **Introduction**

If the 1950s to the 1970s marked the planting of the seeds of modern political clientelism in Belize, and the first decade after independence chronicled a slow transition in its trajectory, the period from the 1990s to 2011 witnessed its rampant expansion and deep entrenchment. After the UDP regained power from the PUP in another close general election in 1993 (16 to 13 seats in the House of Representatives), the PUP won the 1998 election in a landslide (26 to 3 seats). By that 1998 election, political clientelism had vaulted from the ‘innocent’ phase of offering pens, coins and five-dollar bills to, as one observer put it, “a new normal of guiltless and shameless trading of political favours for political support.”<sup>204</sup>

After a repeat PUP victory in 2003, and a lop-sided UDP victory in 2008, episodes of open vote bartering and the informal distribution of public funds through partisans were no longer limited to election periods. In the Belize of 2011, they had become permanent features of the daily political relationships of exchange and influence between citizens and politicians.

This chapter’s purpose is to demonstrate that Belize is indeed an illustrative and critical case of a small, developing Commonwealth Caribbean state that is rapidly becoming a de facto clientelist democracy. It traces changes in the magnitude, nature, key actors and operational features of clientelist activity in the 1990s and thereafter (circa 1992-2011), building the empirical foundation for the analysis of the causes of the post-independence expansion and its implications for Belize’s democracy.

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<sup>204</sup> Interview with Anne-Marie Williams, former constituency aspirant (UDP), 14 December 2010, Belize City. ‘Constituency aspirant’ refers to a person seeking to represent a party in a general election (for the House of Representatives) by winning the party convention in a specific constituency.

## Evidence of Expanding Political Clientelism

### *From Horses' Mouths*

The recollections of past and current politicians and political operatives of both major political parties are critical for confirming the post-independence expansion of clientelistic activities and for constructing a detailed picture of their operational features. These interviews reveal unanimous concurrence with the contestation that clientelist politics expanded rapidly in the 1990s and thereafter. As one former politician recounted, "By 2008, there was a massive difference, a massive increase compared to my first election in 1993...people now believe that politicians have drawers of money ready to give out."<sup>205</sup> In similar vein a party operative stated, "In 1989 it was limited to small amounts for fewer people for such things as help with uniforms and favours to get scholarships. By 2008, it was everything, everything! Paying house rents, electricity bills, school fees...everything!"<sup>206</sup> One party executive related that, "I was in Dangriga for the 2008 election and witnessed the chaos of hundreds of people in line at the Housing Department waiting for some of the 'Venezuela money'. It was the most blatant attempt of an all-out purchase of the election. Causes and issues are now almost irrelevant, and most campaigners are now paid."<sup>207</sup> Another politician lamented, "In the 1980s I was expected to pay a part of a power bill but now they want you to pay the whole bill...and others, too!"<sup>208</sup>

Interviewees pinpointed the 1998 election as the symbolic pivot year when handout politics spiked sharply and then consolidated quickly into a day-to-day phenomenon. In that election, a well-funded opposition PUP dislodged the incumbent UDP with a supermajority of 90 per cent of House seats (26 of 29) and 59.3 per cent of the vote (M. Palacio, 2011: 176). Informants from both parties confirmed that it was by far the most expensive election in Belize's electoral history, and that the PUP, even while in opposition, outspent the UDP significantly. One figure from a former UDP party chairman,<sup>209</sup> which was not much disputed by key PUP officials, placed PUP campaign expenditures at

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<sup>205</sup> Interview with Jorge Espot, former minister (PUP), 10 November 2010, Belize City.

<sup>206</sup> Interview with Leslie.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with Courtenay.

<sup>208</sup> Interview with Francis Fonseca, parliamentarian and former minister (PUP), 9 November 2010, Belize City. He replaced John Briceño as PUP Leader in late 2011.

<sup>209</sup> Interview with Douglas Singh, Senator and Minister of the Police (UDP), 12 November 2010, Belize City.

circa \$21,000,000 and the UDP's at circa \$5,000,000.<sup>210</sup> Key PUP party officials did not deny the conventional view that Michael Ashcroft was the primary financial donor to the party and to selected PUP candidates in the election.<sup>211</sup> A PUP party executive observed that, "The party's campaigns became commercial operations in the early 1990s and this came to a head in 1998."<sup>212</sup> Former prime minister Esquivel suggested that the major difference with previous elections was "the "huge increase in direct cash handouts in 1998."<sup>213</sup>

Overall, the politicians interviewed pointed, most often, to the larger numbers of constituents coming to them for handouts in the 1990s and thereafter, the spread of political clinics, the decline in party-based volunteerism, the increasing monetary amounts requested, the increasing overall costs of constituency operations and campaigns, the expanding use of public resources for handouts and the increasing demands on their time.

### ***From News Reports***

The politicians' narrative of expanding clientelism is also unmistakably observable in news reporting from the period. Using the key words 'clientelism', 'handouts', 'patronage', 'vote buying', 'corruption' and 'election fraud', the author conducted a search of news items in the available electronic archives of seven media houses.<sup>214</sup> Additionally, a review of stories in four major newspapers produced additional material from earlier periods.<sup>215</sup> Several of these accounts are referenced throughout this study. However, for purposes of further illustrating the shift to rampant clientelist activity and the wide range of sectors involved over the past 30 years, this section discusses a sample of these stories and a list 30 examples appears in Appendix 5. To reduce the possibility of bias, the examples are taken from news entities that are more or less partial to either party and from time periods when each was in power.

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<sup>210</sup> These figures refer only to funds from private sources. They do not include public resources that the governing UDP accessed.

<sup>211</sup> Shortly after the PUP victory, Ashcroft (who had procured Belizean citizenship) was appointed Belize's Representative to the United Nations (Ashcroft, 2009: 52).

<sup>212</sup> Interview with Courtenay.

<sup>213</sup> Interview with Esquivel.

<sup>214</sup> See the Bibliography for a listing of newspapers and other media sources referenced. Electronic news archives started in the late 1990s.

<sup>215</sup> These newspapers were accessed at the Belize National Heritage Library.

A gradual, and then rapid, increase in news reporting on stories related to political clientelism is clearly evident. A spike in the number of news accounts related to political clientelism is especially discernible in the lead-up to the 1998 general election. For example, in 'PUP Insider Trading in Land', the *Amandala* of 5 July 1991 alleged that the governing PUP used land to gain partisan political influence. In 'Esquivel Gives Howell \$700,000 to Buy Votes', the *Belize Times* of 3 March 1996 claimed that the UDP candidate intended to buy votes in a by-election in Belize City. In 'Immigration Racket in Voter Fraud', the *Belize Times* of 22 February 1998 alleged that the UDP government was registering new immigrants illegally so as to give the UDP an electoral advantage in the 1998 election. In 'Crazy Land Give Away', the *Belize Times* of 16 August 1998 alleged that the UDP government was facilitating land grants and leases to influence the 1998 election.

This pattern continued after 1998, with reporting of clientelistic practices especially prominent in the months before and after elections. For example, in 'PUP Area Reps Got \$100,000-\$150,000 Each, UDP Got Nothing', the *Amandala* of 5 February 2008, reported on an interview with the financial secretary, that revealed that much of the Venezuela grant was distributed through incumbent politicians of the PUP prior to the 2008 election. In '75 Families in Collet Receive Housing Grants', *7 News* of 28 August 2009 reported on the representative for the Collet constituency handing out grants of up to \$3,000 per person to 75 constituents for housing repairs, as part of the (recovered) second tranche of the Venezuela grant. In 'Christmas Crush at Finnegan's Office', *7 News* of 17 December 2009, reported on a crowd of some 300 citizens queuing for pre-Christmas handouts at a constituency political clinic. In 'PM Barrow Defends Firings at Ministry of Works', the *Amandala* of 11 April 2008, reported on an interview it conducted with Prime Minister Barrow, in which he defended particular post-election dismissals of people, who were hired during the previous PUP term and replaced by persons favourable to the UDP.

The review of media reports also suggests an increase in handout politics at the level of party conventions. For example, in 'Blue Notes for Blue Votes', the *Independent* of 6 July 2007 alleged that the PUP paid voters to attend a PUP

party convention. In 'Joe Blames Dirty Politics and \$\$\$!', the *Amandala* of 15 April 2011 reported on the allegations by a losing candidate of vote buying by his opponent in a PUP convention. In 'Tom Morrison Alleges Vote buying in UDP Albert Division', the *Belize Times* of 17 April 2011 reported on the losing candidate's allegations of vote buying by his opponent as the reason for his loss in a UDP convention.

Overall, the news items for this period point to a significant increase in reports of partisan handouts, accusations of vote buying, corruption related to clientelism, patronage by the public service and the targeted use of public resources to influence elections.

### ***From Official Documents***

In the absence of dedicated research on clientelism in Belize, the most detailed and credible substantiations of the growing scope of clientelist activity are found in reports of commissions of inquiry, independent governance assessments, government audit reports and court documents. Nineteen such reports and documents dealing directly or indirectly with some aspect of clientelism were identified, and most are referenced in this study. Six of these documents are discussed here to illustrate further the case for the expansion and changing nature of political clientelism. They are selected with the aim of achieving some balance among the various thematic areas covered, as well as between PUP- and UDP-specific examples.

The first example relates to the issue of politicians targeting new Central American immigrants for political support. The Report of the National NGO Consortium on the Granting of Belizean Nationality and Implications for Voter Registration (NGO Consortium, 1993) found clear evidence of official abuse of the nationalisation process to fast-track citizenship for Central American migrants during the 1989-1993 PUP government. In particular, the report (1993: 13-14) details how, on the political intervention of incumbent politicians, various departments of government compressed the timeframe required for processing nationality claims and waived various requirements (including the \$200 fee) so as to "accommodate larger number of applicants as the 1993 election came closer." Whereas 492 nationality awards were made to Guatemalans,

Salvadorians and Hondurans in 1991, the number of awards increased to 1,127 in 1992 and to 1,221 in 1993, and there was a corresponding spike in the number of naturalised Belizeans who registered to vote, from 239 in 1991, to 505 in 1992 and to 953 in 1993 (NGO Consortium, 1993: 30-31). Importantly, the Consortium (1993: 1) considered that, because elections can be won by small numbers in Belize, “any registration of illegal persons as voters could be a major factor in deciding individual races and perhaps determining party control of the government.” Although not explicitly stated in the report, it was widely assumed that those immigrants being fast-tracked for nationality and voter registration were expected to boost support for particular PUP candidates.<sup>216</sup>

The second example is the first and only Supreme Court case of alleged voter bribery brought in the 30-year period after independence.<sup>217</sup> Dr Amin Hegar (PUP), who had lost the 1998 election in the Cayo West constituency by just 10 votes (even as his party had won), accused his opponent and then incumbent Erwin Contreras (UDP) of distributing some 400 house lot leases on the very day of the election, including to people who were queuing to vote. Hegar (who also alleged that Contreras was giving out nationality papers to migrants on the same day) was able to get signed affidavits from 10 constituents who all stated that they had been given leases for house lots from Contreras on the day of the election, with the direct or indirect understanding that their vote was expected.<sup>218</sup> Hegar’s court application was thrown out in January 1999, before the case was fully heard, based on technicalities related to the filing of both the affidavits and the court petition. When asked about this incident, Contreras did not deny that leases were being distributed in his constituency before and on election day: “That happened because I had requested 500 housing lots for people in my division and got them late...some on election day. I had to give them out that day.”<sup>219</sup> There is speculation that Hegar was asked by his own party (the PUP) to abandon the case because there were fears that it would

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<sup>216</sup> The author was one of the appointees to the NGO Consortium.

<sup>217</sup> Details of this case are taken from the case file reviewed at the Court Registry (Action 388 of 1998/Election of Representative for Cayo West, 27 August, 1998/Representation of the People’s Act).

<sup>218</sup> Ibid.

<sup>219</sup> Interview with Erwin Contreras, Minister of Economic Development (UDP), Belmopan, 12 December 2010.



draw unwanted attention to similar allegations against the PUP itself.<sup>220</sup> However, Hegar pursued the case until it was dismissed by the Supreme Court.

The third example highlights the alleged distribution of publicly-funded educational assistance for political support. In February 2003, after various news media had been reporting improprieties, the opposition UDP held a press conference and alleged that:

Officials in the Ministry of Education have been simply running a scholarship scam. They have been approving tuition grants to students at universities at home and abroad and these [persons] have never been enrolled in the schools. We have proof of several persons who have been receiving scholarship funds and who were not enrolled in institutions for which they are receiving the grants.<sup>221</sup>

The charges, which were corroborated by a non-student recipient of such funds,<sup>222</sup> were the subject of a special audit performed by the Office of the Auditor General in 2004. The audit found that an initial review pointed to gross irregularities and misuse of public funds: “Some 1,337 individuals who were not registered students...received financial assistance totalling some \$666,192 during the period April 2001 to March 2003.”<sup>223</sup> Once recipients had been selected by senior officials in the ministry, the funds were transferred through the ministry’s usual financial system and payments were made normally by government vouchers.<sup>224</sup> Again, and apart from the prospect of public corruption inferred, the relevant implication was that targeted recipients were constituency supporters or potential supporters of the then minister of education.

The fourth case focuses on a variety of vote trading concerns raised in the report of the Commonwealth Secretariat’s election observers about the 2008 election. The report stated that the observers received “accusations of hurried large-scale granting of citizenship to Guatemalans; the granting of loans and land titles in return for loyalty to the PUP at the polls; and the outright buying of votes, with payment to be made upon proof of how people cast their ballots. This last was exacerbated by a heated debate over the possible use of cell phone cameras in polling booths to record how a vote was cast”

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<sup>220</sup> Name of source is withheld on request.

<sup>221</sup> UDP Accuses Education Officials of Scandal. (2003, February 18). *Channel 5 News*.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> As cited in, 7 News Unearths Report on Scholarship Scandal. (2004, December 1). *7 News*.

<sup>224</sup> In this usage, a ‘government voucher’ is itself de facto money in that it is traded for cash or a cheque at branches of the Treasury Department of the government.

(Commonwealth Secretariat, 2008: 6). The report pointed to three of the more popular resources that the study's findings indicate are bartered for political support in Belize: land, immigration assistance and money. On the day before the 2008 election, the Elections and Boundaries Commission (which still retains built-in government-appointed majority) ruled that there was no law that allowed it to ban cell phones from voting booths, as had been formally requested by the Association of Concerned Belizeans (ACB).<sup>225</sup> Importantly, the account of the observer team marked the first time that accusations of vote trading in Belize were highlighted in a credible international report.

The fifth example highlights the well-known use of land as a clientelist inducement in Belize. A special audit of land issuance in the lead-up to the 2008 election (Office of the Auditor General, 2009b) found that there were numerous procedural violations and irregularities in an accelerated spate of land titles and leases issuances from September 2007 to February 2008, just before the 2008 general election. Although the Auditor General did not comment directly on the partisan nature and purpose of the transactions, the audit's findings implied that the large number of titles and leases approved in the months just before a national election was motivated by the incumbents' attempts to influence individual voters. This was indeed the allegation made repeatedly in the sections of the press. For example, in one story the PUP minister of natural resources was accused of distributing land to friends and PUP supporters outside of established procedures.<sup>226</sup> Again, the conventional view was that some citizens received land as either rewards or inducements for political support.

The sixth case selected is the now infamous saga of the 'Venezuela money'. Just one month before the general election of 7 February 2008, the PUP government informed the nation that a grant to Belize of \$20,000,000 (mostly for low-income housing) from Venezuela could be accessed through its 31 constituency-based candidates.<sup>227</sup> In similar scenes in political constituencies across the country, large crowds gathered outside party-constituency or

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<sup>225</sup> Elections and Boundaries Says it Can't Ban Camera Phones. (2008, February 5). *Amandala*.

<sup>226</sup> More Land Grab, More Patrimony Lost. (2007, February 25). *Guardian*.

<sup>227</sup> Where is my Venezuela Money? (2008, January 11). *7 News*.

government offices to receive or lobby for a share of the 'Venezuela money'.<sup>228</sup> Some citizens made their anger publicly known to the media, as reflected in the threat of one voter: "I am waiting for a check they promised me from one month time...they have to bring that check to my house for me to go and vote."<sup>229</sup> The opposition UDP alleged that the Venezuelan funds were being abused to buy the election, but they also encouraged voters to "Take their [PUP] money and vote them out."<sup>230</sup> The \$20,000,000 Venezuelan grant all but disappeared in the four-week period before the election. A post-election special and official audit of the funds (Office of the Auditor General, 2009a: 5-7 and 25) revealed that disbursement decisions were at the discretion of politicians, that transfers ranged between \$500-\$1,000, that there were no criteria to define 'low-income' and that there were numerous financial irregularities, including over \$7,000,000 being totally unaccounted.

Two weeks after winning the election, the new UDP government learnt that the Venezuelan grant was not \$20,000,000 but actually \$40,000,000 and that the former administration had secretly used the other half towards settling a government guaranteed loan to Ashcroft's Belize Bank Limited<sup>231</sup> on behalf of a private local business group (Lawrence, 2008: 2). Using the courts, the UDP government recovered the second \$20,000,000 from the Belize Bank in August 2008 and moved quickly in early 2009 to commence disbursement of over \$18,000,000 as housing grants to citizens (not surprisingly) through constituency-based representatives.<sup>232</sup>

### ***Trends and Threads***

In addition to clear indications of a sea change in the trajectory of political clientelism in the late 1990s, several noteworthy trends are discernable in these examples of expanding clientelist politics in the 1990s and thereafter. For one, it is obvious that both the PUP and UDP are implicated as engaging in similar types of clientelist practices. After its victory in 1984 and especially after the 1989 'community-development' episode, the UDP could no longer justifiably

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<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> Desperate Fray at Housing Department. (2008, February 6). *7 News*

<sup>230</sup> Interview with Patrick Faber, Minister of Education (UDP), 12 December 2010, Belize City.

<sup>231</sup> The Belize Bank was formally the Royal Bank of Canada, which Ashcroft purchased in 1987.

<sup>232</sup> From media interview with Prime Minister Barrow in 'Venezuela Money' Will Be Free Money. (2008, October 15). *7 News*.

paint the PUP as the sole perpetrators of handout politics—even if the conventional wisdom continued to be that the PUP was more adept at the clientelist game than the UDP. Indeed, both parties adopted clientelist practices that had proven successful for the other. For example, after elements of the PUP fast-tracked the registration of immigrants for electoral advantage in 1993, some UDP candidates ran similar schemes in 1998. In particular, the example of the ‘Venezuela money’ stands out for the conspicuous disbursements of large amounts of funds from the same source by both political parties in rapid succession. In short, political clientelism had become a characteristic feature, indeed dominant feature, of the electoral strategies of both major parties and, by extension, of the two-party system itself.

The body of evidence also illustrates that, even as there are spikes in clientelist activity during election campaigns, the phenomenon has become more and more characteristic of day-to-day political relationships between elections. For example, the scholarship scandal, the ‘Christmas Crush’ story, several of the land scandals and the disbursement of the second part of the Venezuela money all happened outside of campaign periods. Another clear indicator of this ‘new normal’ is that allegations of direct voter bribery have become regular occurrences even within the on-going intra-party contests of both parties. This is evident in the aforementioned pre-2012 elections stories ‘Joe Blames Dirty Politics and \$\$\$’ and ‘Tom Morrison Alleges Vote buying in UDP Albert Division’. Additionally, and as indicated by the 2008 controversies related to having cell phones in voting booths, politicians have also employed more novel tactics to monitor individual voter compliance. Although such tactics are in no way unique to Belize, the 2008 cell phone saga is yet another indicator of the prevalence of political clientelism.

These examples also suggest that the goods and services traded in clientelist exchanges are generally similar to the pre-independence period, but that several more have been added to the core list. The primary resources continue to include land, houses and housing repairs, jobs, education assistance and money. With regard to land, several of the examples involved both parties dispensing, when in power, land for political gain. Notwithstanding that one-third

of Belize's territory (mainland) is under some level of environmental protection and much of the remainder is privately owned (Merman and Wilson, 2005), the Government of Belize can still access land to continue to use this much-demanded resource as a preferred inducement for votes.

However, immigration assistance emerged in the 1990s as a new 'tradable' and highly demanded resource. The NGO Consortium Report of 1993 was the first to provide independent confirmation that a political party was targeting Central American immigrants as potential clients. Every election thereafter would witness one party accusing the other of registering immigrants illegally by falsifying and/or fast-tracking nationality applications. Whereas the incentive for the political party and politicians is to gain electoral advantage, that for the immigrants is to gain access to work permits, residency or nationality (so as to facilitate legal access to such resources as jobs, land and scholarships).

Interestingly, the immigration issue provided some of the clearest indications of the openness and intent of clientelist exchanges in the lead-up to the 2012 election. Like the governments before, the incumbent UDP government was fast-tracking nationality awards. In a television interview one UDP representative openly admitted that he was paying up to half of the application fees for some 100 potential 'new' Belizeans (at a total cost of some \$15,000), personally handling and filling in the forms to pass on to the immigration office. When asked if he was expecting votes from this activity, he responded, "Well I believe that if I'm working day and night for them, and they are out here seeing it, I don't think that they would turn their backs on me [on election day]."<sup>233</sup> There is also clear evidence that those being assisted know the clientelist game well. A case in point is the nationally televised reflection of an immigrant waiting for application assistance in a line outside the house of a UDP political operative in Belize City: "We are a people who are living in a foreign country and we would like to exercise our rights, but we cannot do so without our papers...we will get our papers in exchange for our votes, because that is what he is asking right now. If we get our nationality, then we get to vote for him."<sup>234</sup> In a one-month period just weeks before the March 2012 general election, over 1,000 new

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<sup>233</sup> Honourable Penner Says He's Paying Half For 100 New Citizens. (2012, January 18). *7 News*.

<sup>234</sup> Citizenship for Votes in Belize City. (2012, 18 January). *Channel 5 News*.

immigrants were naturalised and registered (some in one day) when the average number of naturalisation per quarter was below 100.<sup>235</sup>

Several of the examples also suggest that politicians quickly became more adept at manipulating informal modes of transferring resources to citizens. These include both direct transfers, such as gifts at Christmas and money for votes, and indirect transfers through government offices, such as vouchers for educational assistance and residency permits. With regard to the indirect mode, the 2002/2003 scholarship scandal highlights one of the common strategies that politicians have used when in government to transfer funds to favoured persons and constituents as incentives or pay-offs for political support. In short, lists of names of recipients of a resource or service are received informally from constituency representatives or party candidates. These are then approved by the relevant minister or senior public officer and processed formally through a ministry's financial system before being disbursed to the recipient. The end result is similar to that of a direct transfer from the politician: the politician influences which individuals receive public resources.

A more recent example of transfers through party representatives is the \$1,400,000 Christmas Assistance Programme of December 2011 in which \$40,000 was 'distributed' to each of the 31 constituencies to allow UDP representatives and aspirants to deliver additional Christmas goodies to constituents.<sup>236</sup> This tradition of politicians handing out Christmas baskets of turkeys, hams, other food stuffs and gifts has long existed, but the funding has tended to come largely from private sources or from the constituency stipend. In this instance, public funds were used in a new and temporary handout scheme in which constituency-based politicians made the decisions regarding recipients and personally handed out gift packages (with full media coverage).<sup>237</sup> Opposition (PUP) party representatives complained loudly about their exclusion from this popular scheme.<sup>238</sup> Just three weeks later, the government announced yet another 'special assistance' scheme in which each constituency received

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<sup>235</sup> Ibid.

<sup>236</sup> 'PM Reports On Controversial Christmas Assistance Programme', *7 News*, 13 January 2012; and 'Political Christmas Assistance Programme is Vote buying Says PUP and VIP', *Amandala* 23 December 2011.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

another \$50,000 of public funds to be disbursed at the discretion of the UDP's 31 candidates for the general election.<sup>239</sup> Middle-class citizens have not been left out of such 'special' pre-election programmes, as recent examples of loan and mortgage write-offs in 2011 and 2012 attest. In October 2011, and some five months before the 2012 elections, the UDP government wrote off 9,200 of what were described as non-performing loans valued at \$60,000,000.<sup>240</sup> And in January 2012 and less than two months before the 2012 election, the government wrote off another 780 mortgages (each under \$50,000) valued at \$17,000,000 and that were held by the Belize Social Security Board (SSB).<sup>241</sup>

Another clear trend is that, even as the news media have increasingly reported on incidents and allegations related to political clientelism, news outlets have done so with negligible commentary on their possible illegality or on their implications for democratic governance. Indeed, clientelist activities tend to be presented as a normal, even cultural, part of political activity. This was remarkably clear in the 2008 news reporting around the 'Venezuela money'. Statements from citizens—which left no doubt that vote trading was taking place—were broadcast to a national audience without critical comment on the legal prohibition against exchanges of money for votes. Both this blatant and open sharing of such sentiments by citizens, and the normality that characterised the news reporting, would have been near unimaginable three decades earlier. Ironically, in a period of expanding clientelism, of high frequency of public allegations of vote buying and even of numerous official confirmations of some allegations via audits and inquiries, the Hegar case of 1998 was the first and only case to be taken to the courts between 1981 and 2011.<sup>242</sup> Although the term 'innocent' was useful to distinguish the early years of clientelism, it was certainly wholly inappropriate by 2011.

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<sup>239</sup> Lavish Spending to Seduce the Electorate. (2012, February 2). *Channel 5 News*.

<sup>240</sup> Senator Questions Loan Write-Offs. (2011, October 25). *Channel 5 News*. These loans had been acquired through various 'special' programmes of the Housing Department over a fifteen-year period under both PUP and UDP governments.

<sup>241</sup> Government Writes Off Mortgages, Opposition Says Piñata Politics. (2012, February 13). *7 News*.

<sup>242</sup> This does not include the institutionalised annual court challenges made to changes to the constituency-based voters' lists by politicians and citizens. Election laws require voters to vote in the constituencies in which they reside, but some politicians seek electoral advantage by working around this requirement.

## Deconstructing Clientelist Operations Thirty Years On

### *Political Clinics in Every Constituency*

As a consequence of population growth from 189,392 in 1990 to 312,698 in 2010 (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2011) and of boundary revisions, the number of political constituencies in Belize was increased from 28 to 29 in 1993 and to 31 in 2007. In November 2011 there were, on average, some 10,090 citizens and 5,529 registered voters per constituency (Election and Boundaries Commission, 2011). The PUP and the UDP have similar institutional structures at this level organised around elected constituency executive committees.<sup>243</sup> Special conventions in each constituency elect or endorse candidates to contest the next general election. With varying levels of organisational sophistication, representatives and candidates divide their constituencies into zones with a fixed number of streets, each having a zone leader and other operatives.<sup>244</sup>

Constituency operations, including political clinics, are most often administered on a day-to-day basis from the constituency-based offices of elected representatives and standard bearers.<sup>245</sup> It is important to understand that (for members of the House of Representatives) these constituency offices ostensibly have the key functions of allowing representatives to share government policy and programme information with constituents, and they permit constituents to raise their concerns directly with representatives. However, the line between these key functions and clientelist activities has become so blurred that constituency offices are often denoted as 'clinics' by many citizens. Indeed, one of the most significant indicators of the rapid expansion of political clientelism is the major increase in the number and scope of work of political clinics since the first Price clinic in the 1950s. Clinics are now the year-round nodes of clientelist politician-citizen relationships nationwide.

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<sup>243</sup> Information on party organisation and conventions is derived from the PUP (People's United Party, 2010) and from UDP (United Democratic Party, 2010) party constitutions.

<sup>244</sup> The research unearthed one departure from this modus operandi. Instead of zoning by streets, the PUP representative for the Albert constituency sub-divided his constituents into some 60 sets of 30 persons, each set being the direct personal responsibility of two or three operatives. He argued that this facilitates attending the needs of individual constituents and allows for more direct personal attention to be given to constituents who do not reside in the division. (Interview with Mark Espat, parliamentarian and former minister (PUP), 11 November 2010, Belize City).

<sup>245</sup> 'Standard bearers' are party candidates who are seeking to unseat or replace elected representatives.



Although Belize City and urban areas still tend to have larger and more regular clinic operations than rural areas, political clinics have become country-wide phenomena. In 2011, and apart from some periods of clinic inactivity related to changes of constituency candidates by one party or the other, at least two on-going clinic operations were identifiable in most constituencies—one PUP and one UDP. Consequently, when all 31 constituencies have some level of up-and-running clinic operations, there are 62 clinics countrywide. However, allowing for periods of clinic inactivity in some constituencies in the course of an average year, triangulation of information from politicians suggests that there are at least 55 clinic-type operations at any one time—31 of which are operated by politicians of the ruling party.<sup>246</sup> This is the number used in the analytical discussion that follows.

In a continuation of the Price practice, most politicians conduct personal clinics from their constituency offices at least once weekly, and some politicians do so even more regularly.<sup>247</sup> Although fixed office-based constituency clinics are the most frequent venues for such operations, there are also other arrangements for citizens to access clinics. A few candidates in constituencies that are spread out over larger geographical areas, such as Stann Creek West, Toledo East and Toledo West,<sup>248</sup> have multiple constituency offices and/or conduct mobile clinic operations.<sup>249</sup> Also, it is not uncommon for incumbent politicians who have ministerial portfolios to conduct party-constituency and clinic business from official government offices or from community centres located in or near their constituencies.<sup>250</sup> Additionally, most representatives who are ministers conduct clinics from their official offices in Belmopan or elsewhere on regular basis. The audiences for these clinics are mostly persons seeking resources or assistance

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<sup>246</sup> This number (55) refers to clientelist activities that have a fixed site of on-going operation (i.e., a clinic office), as well as other less fixed and more informal operations that function with some regularity. This number was estimated in 2010/2011 when intra-party conventions were gearing up for the 2012 election.

<sup>247</sup> Prime Minister Barrow was the only incumbent politician interviewed for this study who did not hold a weekly constituency clinic. Instead, his trusted sister discharges clinic duties on a daily basis on his behalf (Interview with Barrow).

<sup>248</sup> See the constituency map at Figure 3 for the location of these constituencies.

<sup>249</sup> For example, while conducting field work in Toledo, the author witnessed the UDP representative for Toledo West conducting a 'clinic' from the cab of his official truck in Punta Gorda. Word quickly spread about his presence and a line of some 25 people formed. The author joined the queue to observe the process and spoke to some persons waiting.

<sup>250</sup> For example, the clinic of the representative for Orange Walk North (and Minister of Natural Resources) is conducted from the office of the Ministry of Natural Resources in Orange Walk Town, and the clinic of the representative for Pickstock (and the Minister of Foreign Affairs) is conducted from a constituency community centre.

related to particular ministerial portfolios, but these are also open to the ministers' own constituents. As another carry-over from the Price era, prime ministers have also continued to conduct national-level clinics from offices in Belmopan and/or Belize City.

Although some constituents can and do visit political clinics on a daily basis to make and follow-up on individual requests, it is on the politicians' weekly personal clinic days that the most intense clientelist activity occurs. On these days, citizens either arrive on the advice of brokers or other constituency operatives or just show up for a chance to see politicians. Representatives (particularly those with ministerial portfolios) generally have more extensive operations than backbenchers, opposition politicians and new aspirants. Similarly, opposition politicians who are also elected representatives tend to have larger operations than their counterparts, but it is not unusual for well-financed constituency aspirants to have elaborate clinic operations. On an on-going basis, but especially on clinic days, brokers and office staff monitor the needs and requests of constituents and provide the politicians with information on past requests, responses and disbursements. In constituencies with larger clinic networks, it is not unusual for politicians to attend to long queues of constituents for up to eight hours on weekly clinic days.

### ***Paid Workers and Brokers but Few Volunteers***

On those days of the week when politicians are not conducting personal constituency clinics, their offices receive and screen requests from constituents, dispense pre-approved resources and services and gather information on constituents. The majority of the offices now have full-time employees and intricate office management systems to keep track of requests, responses to requests, partisan affiliations, numbers in households and other such data on constituents. In the case of incumbent party politicians and most opposition party operations, the average full-time constituency office is operated by one to three paid staff and/or part-time workers. In most cases, staffs include an office administrator, a receptionist/secretary, a messenger/office assistant and temporary outreach workers, who are all invariably trusted partisans and fluctuate in number depending on the election cycle. If a constituency office also

doubles as a community centre with educational programmes, or if the constituency has a separate community centre, there can be additional paid workers. Additionally, most politicians employ part-time helpers to assist in day-to-day communications with constituents and to serve as their ears on the ground. These party workers also fluctuate in number with the cyclical highs and lows of clinic activity.

Most party workers now receive either some kind of monetary stipend or the privilege of primary access to their politicians and to the discretionary handouts and favours they provide. For those few politicians who still have a voluntary element in their operations, most volunteers are family members or close friends. One politician complained that “By 2008 I had to pay for campaigners...getting indebted in the process. I had to lobby more businesses for donations. Some of my campaigners actually mutinied for more pay! They went on strike!”<sup>251</sup> Another related that even when persons do give some free time it is not true volunteerism because they expect the privileges of having first access to the goods and services that are disbursed.<sup>252</sup> By 2011, paid brokers, office staff, zone workers, street campaigners, signature gatherers and agitators had become the norm.

Whereas the overall increase in the number of paid party workers is a clear indicator of the level of organisation of clientelist networks in Belize, the expansion in the numbers and influence of brokers is particularly telling. The use of brokers (variously denoted as ‘bosses’, ‘sidekicks’, ‘captains’, ‘street captains’ and ‘bagmen’) as trusted go-betweens has expanded since the 1990s. Politicians, especially incumbents, who have access to more resources and are subject to more demands from constituents, tend to use multiple brokers. Politicians who have large constituencies with many small communities, such as Toledo West and Stann Creek West, also tend to use more brokers to facilitate reaching constituents. Interviews with politicians and brokers reveal that brokers in the Belize context are generally the overall managers of constituency operations, including the office and its staff, the administration of zone workers and communications with citizens. A notable feature of broker-

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<sup>251</sup> Interview with Juan Vildo Marin, former minister (PUP) 22 March 2011, Corozal Town.

<sup>252</sup> Interview with Saldivar.

politician relationships in Belize is the high proportion of brokers who double as the drivers and personal assistants of politicians. Of the 23 active politicians from the major political parties who were interviewed for this study, 16 employed broker-drivers. At times when their politician bosses are in power, these broker-drivers often become the official drivers and personal aides of elected representatives, as paid public officers.

On the whole, brokers (the vast majority of whom are male) have developed public reputations for their levels of political access and for their growing wealth. The brokers who were interviewed were highly aware and even boastful of the influence they wield.<sup>253</sup> As one broker said, “I am the chief cook and bottle washer...driver, security, lead campaigner, confidant, liaison and overall zone commander for the boss. I know the voters better than him. I even do clinics on his behalf sometimes.”<sup>254</sup> Another stated, “I am his right-hand man, his main contact with the people and without me he couldn’t operate. I get 80-90 [mobile phone] calls a day from people wanting something. People know my role as having his ear and come to me directly.”<sup>255</sup> Yet another stated, “People flock me everywhere like I am Santa. I have the power to decide to take up a case or not. The people have high demands and sometimes they accuse me of blocking them. It’s hard work.”<sup>256</sup> All the brokers also confirmed that their politician bosses gave them varying degrees of authority to dispense cash, resources or favours on their behalf. Overall, they indicated that the level of responsibility a politician delegates depends on factors such as the personal style of the politician, time availability, the geographical spread of the constituency and the availability of resources to dispense.

However, as much as the increased use of brokers has accompanied the overall expansion of political clinic operations, the majority of politicians still maintain a high personal profile in their constituencies. They indicate that not only do they want to ensure that their constituents are aware of ‘who’ exactly is helping them, but that their constituents also expect direct communication with them in the context of Belize’s small size. Although the average numbers of

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<sup>253</sup> By prior agreement, the personal details of the six brokers interviewed are not revealed.

<sup>254</sup> Interview with Broker Dan, 1 February 2011.

<sup>255</sup> Interview with Broker Jan, 15 March 2011,

<sup>256</sup> Interview with Broker John, 31 March 2011.

voters per constituency had increased by an average of some 2,000 in 1981 to over 5,000 in 2011, it still has been relatively easy for a politician to maintain a high degree of visibility and operate a highly personalised political clinic network. Indeed, the conventional wisdom is that politicians avoid a regular, visible presence in their constituencies at their own peril.

That being so, most politicians interviewed for this study still complained of being overwhelmed and even frustrated by the time demands of dealing with constituents' requests for assistance, and that they indicated that they devise ways to cope and make excuses. Many, especially outside of election-time, avoid public places such as restaurants and clubs or go to ones far from their constituencies. Some grumbled that some clients gather outside their homes in early morning or late evening and that they design ways to dodge constituents. One politician changed his interview venue (with the author) from his constituency to a 'secret' office on the other side of Belize City in order to avoid harassment. Another lamented, "It all makes the work of politicians distasteful...you have a constant flow of requests and people wherever you are. In my last stint, my motto was 'high visibility but minimal contact'. It is frustrating! I used to leave my house before 6: 00 am just to avoid people who would come there...and I sometimes hide out for long hours with friends or family before going home at night."<sup>257</sup>

### ***Periods of Heightened Clinic Activity***

In the months leading up to general and local elections, politicians increase their presence in the constituencies and hold more clinic days, hire more party workers and disperse more money and handouts. A common feature of constituency-based handout politics around election time is that politicians host special events in which large-value items such as house lots and loans are distributed publicly to a gathering of constituents. However, outside of election campaigns, there are also spikes of higher clientelist activity in the normal course of a year. The key periods are around Easter holidays, the start of the school year, Mother's Day and Christmas. It has become normal for politicians to organise the delivery of gift packages (such as food, toys and school

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<sup>257</sup> Interview with Sevelo Baeza, former minister (PUP), 16 March 2011, Corozal Town.

supplies), throw constituency parties and organise special vacation or shopping trips around these dates. These ‘bashments’ generally include free transportation, raffles, gifts and free or subsidised food and drinks. These annual handout events tend to be more elaborate in Belize City and other urban areas than in rural areas. The annual Christmas party in the UDP Mesopotamia constituency of the Honourable Michael Finnegan is so well known for its generous handouts that it even makes the national news. In December 2010 a television news station reported on the lavish Christmas party in Mesopotamia at which 1,700 gift packages (including hams and turkeys) and 1,700 plates of food were given out.<sup>258</sup> The figure 1,700 represented 47.1 per cent of the 3,610 registered voters (as at August 2010) in Mesopotamia and was above the total number of households in that constituency.

Additionally, as noted previously, intra-party candidate conventions, which were once mostly uneventful and predictable ‘crowning of the chosen’ affairs, have evolved into extremely competitive and expensive contests in the past decade. For example, the 2001 contest for the PUP Pickstock division (to replace a retiring George Price) is often singled out for being one of the most expensive intra-party fights since independence. Then political newcomer, Godfrey Smith (who defeated a nephew of Price at the convention) stated that his campaign spent over \$500,000 in the six-month period leading to the convention.<sup>259</sup> Indeed, it is at the level of party conventions that aspiring politicians are now baptised into the reality of handout politics. Those aspirants who are challenging incumbents of the party in government and who do not have ready access to public resources and political clinic networks are generally disadvantaged. Yet there has been a trend in the past decade of incumbents facing more aggressive challenges from new and, sometimes, well-funded, aspirants. A number of constituents indicated that they welcome hard-fought party conventions in their constituencies as they know that opportunities for handouts will spike. As one Pickstock resident put it during the 2011 UDP convention season, “I hope somebody run against Sedi [the incumbent] for UDP

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<sup>258</sup> A Very Finny X-mas. (2010, December 16). *7 News*.

<sup>259</sup> Interview with Godfrey Smith, former minister (PUP), 10 November 2010, Belize City.

[convention] so that blue notes<sup>260</sup> could flow. Or else we have to wait for 'general' [elections]."<sup>261</sup>

### ***The 'Formalisation' of the Handout Process***

From the viewpoint of constituents who have identified a need or a want, the process of communicating these to politicians of either party, albeit informal, is now well institutionalised. The majority of citizens gather information on what is available and what is possible to request from politicians from neighbours, the politicians' offices, brokers and other party workers, government offices and through the media. Thereafter, the most established way to communicate the need or want is to see a politician personally through the weekly clinic system or to communicate with a broker. However, this is not the only mode of communication in a normal clinic network. As noted, if the politicians are representatives whose party is in power, they may be visited at their official government offices. On occasions, but especially around election time, politicians and/or their staff do house-to-house visits, providing opportunities for constituents to communicate requests directly. Other means of communication include zone meetings, letters, e-mails, telephone calls and, increasingly, text messaging. Indeed, active politicians indicate that cell phones are increasingly used by some constituents to make and follow-up on requests.

One innovative lobbying mechanism increasingly used by some citizens since the late 1990s are the now ubiquitous live morning call-in radio shows—most of which are also televised. Citizens who feel they are not getting a need or want met, especially after failing through the clinic system, call these live radio shows to make personal requests for goods and services of specific politicians. This is akin to a public calling-out and shaming of politicians by constituents, which increases the pressure to respond. Indeed, politicians have increasingly responded—especially if persons call repeatedly to multiple talk shows. Several politicians confirm that they, or their staff, monitor these call-in talk shows on a daily basis and assess if a response is needed. Often, the politicians' staff or the politicians themselves call the radio shows either to make denials, give advice to the complainant on how to get assistance, or commit (live on radio) to

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<sup>260</sup> A 'blue note' is a \$100 dollar in Belize.

<sup>261</sup> Interview with Constituent P2, 24 January 2011, Belize City.

address certain personal situations in short order.<sup>262</sup> A flip side of this public mode of communicating individual needs and wants is that, in some cases, a politician may respond by cutting or decreasing a handout the caller is already receiving, in effect using the radio as a means of monitoring client compliance regarding political support. For example, one woman expressed fear that if she called the radio station to complain about not getting promised funds for housing repairs, her representative might stop the regular payment of her electricity bill.<sup>263</sup> As such, the call-in show has become a new and public forum for the playing out of the handout game.

### ***Numbers and Profiles of Clients***

A survey by the SPEAR in 2005 is the only local public poll that has included a specific question related in some way to political clientelism: “Would you vote for a political party because of monetary and other financial benefits?” (SPEAR, 2005: 3).<sup>264</sup> SPEAR reported that 31.8 per cent of the 387 persons polled said ‘yes’. In the AmericasBarometer regional poll of 2010, 17.1 per cent of 1,504 Belizeans surveyed answered ‘sometimes’ to the question: “Has a candidate or someone from a political party offered you something like a favour, food, or any other benefit or thing in return for your vote” (2011: 1). Clearly, apart from these being different questions, polling past or future behaviour on an informal and, often, illegal activity such as political clientelism is challenging.<sup>265</sup> Some people will not be forthcoming or honest about such behaviour. Caveats aside, these polls do indicate a significant level of incidence of vote trading and/or vote-trading intent over the past decade. However, this thesis views political clientelism as including but going beyond vote trading proper.

It is also difficult to estimate total numbers of clients with a high degree of accuracy in a qualitative study. Apart from the fact that politicians keep poor records or do not allow access to existing records, politicians and clients

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<sup>262</sup> The author monitored various morning talk shows during field work.

<sup>263</sup> Interview with Constituent P2.

<sup>264</sup> SPEAR was a pioneer in conducting opinion polls in Belize with some degree of regularity. Although the statistical accuracy of its polls have likely improved over time, it is, perhaps, wise to view SPEAR’s stated margins of error of + or -5 per cent as conservative.

<sup>265</sup> For example, a study on vote buying response bias (in municipal elections in Nicaragua) found that whereas only two per cent of voters admitted to being offered a bribe when asked directly, twenty-four per cent admitted to this behaviour when asked more indirectly through a ‘list experiment’ method (Gonzalez-Ocantos, de Jonge, Meléndez, Osorio, and Nickerson, 2012: 202).



negotiate exchanges in a variety of ways. Yet a reasonable estimate can be garnered from the politicians/patrons themselves. When asked how many different constituents come to them on a weekly basis to make or follow up on an individual request (including visits to clinics, official offices, homes and/or other contact), the 23 active politicians interviewed for this study gave estimates that ranged from 180 to 270 persons, with an average of circa 200 per week. This would be the equivalent of approximately 860 persons per month per constituency (200 x 4.3 weeks). With an average of 5,231 registered voters per constituency (in August 2010), 860 clients represented circa 16.5 per cent of all registered constituents. Interestingly, when asked to estimate the proportion of their constituents who participates in handout politics in some way, the responses from the active politicians ranged from 25 to 30 per cent—significantly higher than the 16.5 per cent estimated above.

Although they may not account fully for the more intense clinic activity in an election year, and although some clients do go to more than one politician, these estimates from politicians' assessments give some idea of the increase in the number of clients as a proportion of total numbers of registered voters in constituencies compared to 1980/1981—when clinics were few and mostly urban-based. Based on this qualitative assessment, and with caveats noted, the analysis in this chapter proceeds from a decidedly conservative estimate of 20 per cent of total constituents/total electorate (being involved, to some degree, in clientelist politics). This proportion is at a mid-point between the 16.5 per cent estimate and interviewees' estimate of 25-30 per cent. It is, in all likelihood, less than the actual proportion, but given the limitations of both qualitative and quantitative methods of estimating numbers in informal phenomena such as clientelism, and considering that the thesis' core analysis is not significantly affected by a conservative estimate, 20 per cent is reasonable. It represents circa 1,046 persons per constituency (based on the average of 5,231 registered voters) or 32,430 of the total electorate of 162,150 in August 2010.<sup>266</sup> Considering that constituency elections can be won by margins of hundreds and

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<sup>266</sup> This discussion of client numbers introduces the question of why the remainder of the electorate does not engage in political clientelism. This question is addressed in the first section of Chapter 4 on the implications of clientelism for Belize's democracy.

even tens of votes, client numbers in this range can be highly consequential for matters related to clientelist politics—including election outcomes.

When asked to describe the characteristics of the clientele that utilise the clinics, there were some clear trends in the responses from politicians and brokers. In terms of age ranges, the responses generally parallel the structure of the age demographic in the 2010 population census: i.e., 20.2 per cent in the 15 to 24 age range,<sup>267</sup> and 40 per cent in the 25-64 age range (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2011: 53-54). However, in terms of gender, there was unanimous agreement that women, who make up 49.5 per cent of the population, utilise the clinics in significantly larger numbers than men. Estimates ranged from 55 per cent to as high as 75 per cent. The responses also revealed that, whereas women make more requests for basic and immediate needs and for items with smaller monetary value (such as utility bills, paying the rent, medicines, food for the day/week), men are more likely to request larger-value items and items related to personal needs (such as assistance with getting cars, money for entertainment, and so forth). Several politicians confessed that they prefer women as clients because they ask for less in terms of monetary value, do so in a less threatening manner, and are more likely to accept delays and excuses.

In terms of ethnicity, most politicians agree that the majority of clients in a particular constituency are members of the ethnic group that constitutes the majority in that constituency. For example, the Pickstock constituency has a majority of Creole clients, Toledo West has a majority of Maya clients, Dangriga has a majority of Garifuna clients and Orange Walk Central has a majority of Mestizo clients. However, responses to follow-up questions reveal that there are differences in the kind of requests that persons from different ethnic groups make. Most of these differences derive from geographic locations and the economic activities relevant to these. For example, Belize City politicians report that Creoles tend to make more requests for money and to meet immediate-needs, while Latino immigrants tend to request assistance with residency issues

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<sup>267</sup> It is important to note that politicians also target adolescents below the voting age (18 years) with the logic that some may become voters by the time of the next election.

and productive inputs. The examples most often cited of the latter are requests for gardening and carpentry equipment. Mestizo or Maya clients in area with agricultural activities tend to make more requests for land and agricultural inputs. The active politicians interviewed also indicate that persons with Mestizo and Maya ethnicities are more apt to approach them in organised groups, and not only as individuals.<sup>268</sup>

There was strong consensus among all politicians interviewed that 'the poor' made up the majority of the clients who visited their clinics, but also that the number of middle-class clients has been increasing steadily. Most also indicate that middle-class clients are more likely than the poor to use means other than the constituency-based clinic to make requests (for example, direct contact with the politicians outside of clinic days, by letters or telephone calls and visits to the official offices of those politicians who are representatives and ministers). Another distinction was between clients who are really in need of help, and those who are opportunistically taking advantage of the informality of the clientelist game. Even though there was agreement that the 'opportunistic' category has been increasing, there was even broader consensus among the politicians interviewed that most people are genuinely in need of assistance. Indeed, the vast majority of these politicians, as did those of the Price era, sought to justify most of their giving of handouts and favours as helping needy people. The challenge, they maintain, is to be able to distinguish the two types and to minimize the free-loaders. Yet when pressed, most admitted to giving inducements to persons they know are opportunistic, especially around the time of party conventions, national elections and the aforementioned annual periods of heightened demand.

Additionally, the interviews with citizens and events observed by the author suggest that clients in Belize tend to be somewhat more politically active than non-clients and seem to be more informed about constituency politics and

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<sup>268</sup> Apart from the historical geographic clustering of ethnic groups, the major groups (Creole, Garifuna, Maya, East Indian, and Mestizo) have all formed ethnic councils, mostly in the post-independent period. Some observers have argued that one of the intended functions of these councils is to improve access to resources for particular ethnic groups. For example, J. Palacio (2001: 3) has suggested that, "[T]he Garifuna and the Maya are using ethnicity as a method of inserting themselves into the new Belizean nation thereby being able to extract socio-economic benefits for themselves and their progeny." The most notable recent example of this is the on-going legal claim (based on ancestral rights) of a coalition of Maya groups for a Maya homeland in the Toledo district.

attend more partisan events. Indeed, the AmericasBarometer poll on vote buying (which included Belize) found “strong evidence that, considering the Latin American and Caribbean regions as a whole, the more civically and politically engaged a person is, the more likely she is to report being offered a material benefit in exchange for her vote” (Faughnan and Zechmeister, 2011: 5). If true for Belize, this could be, in part, as Faughnan and Zechmeister (2011: 3) contended, because politicians target those more likely to vote. However, it could also be because clients and potential clients themselves proactively seek information that can be used to maximise clientelist opportunities, and/or because clients are participating in some events as conditions of benefits already received or promised. It is an interesting area for further research.

### ***Goods and Services Offered and Requested***

Other clear indicators of the expansion in clientelist activity since independence are the major increases in the types and volumes of public and private goods and services that are offered and/or requested in political clinic networks. Overall, politician and citizen interviews indicate that the specific types of ‘tradables’ have expanded to almost every divisible good and service imaginable. As one politician noted, “By the time I ran in 2003, people wanted almost everything really...computers, cement blocks, sand, money for utility bills...everything.”<sup>269</sup> Indeed, the term ‘everything’ was common in most responses from politicians and brokers, who rattled off long lists of goods and services they offer or receive requests for. A collation of these responses, as depicted in Table 3, allows for a comprehensive (albeit not exhaustive) listing and sub-categorising of the types of goods and services offered and demanded circa 2011.

Based both on politicians’ and constituents’ responses, the primary resources requested and delivered remain land, housing, jobs, school fees, healthcare, payment of utility bills and money (hard cash) for various purposes. Whereas a few of the categories, such as durable goods, vacations and immigration assistance, are ‘new’ compared to the time period around independence, the major difference lies in the extent to which the categories are increasingly

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<sup>269</sup> Interview with Singh.

stratified. This is manifested, for example, in the fact that not only have the type of bills expanded, but that politicians now pay a larger proportion of these bills, or even the entire bills. This suggests that the overall volume of the exchange has also expanded significantly with the increase in types and number of sub-categories of 'tradables' over the past 30 years.

**TABLE 3**  
**Categorisation of Goods and Services Provided by Politicians, circa 2011**

| <b>CATEGORY</b>                                 | <b>SPECIFIC RESOURCES</b>  |
|---|--|
| <b>Employment</b>                               | Permanent government jobs, temporary government jobs, project jobs and private sector jobs.                                |
| <b>Land</b>                                     | Residential lots, farm land, land for commerce and land for speculation.   |
| <b>Official Appointments</b>                    | Official public offices, statutory bodies and foreign postings.  |
| <b>Houses and Building Materials</b>            | Houses, housing repair, land fill, cement, construction sand and gravel, lumber, roofing materials, floor tiles and others |
| <b>Medical Assistance</b>                       | Doctors' fees, medicines, medical travel, medical procedures and hospital costs  |
| <b>Educational Assistance</b>                   | School fees, text books, school bags, uniforms, scholarships and transportation.   |
| <b>Utility and other Recurrent Bills</b>        | Water, electricity, telephone, mobiles, internet, cable television, cooking gas and house rent.                            |
| <b>Durable Goods</b>                            | Stoves, refrigerators, washing machines, bicycles, gardening tools and cars.   |
| <b>Infrastructure</b>                           | Electrification, roads and drainage  |
| <b>Staples</b>                                  | Basic staples, grocery bills, one-off meals and gift baskets   |
| <b>Transport</b>                                | Airline, bus and boat fares.   |
| <b>Official Loans/Grants</b>                    | For housing, small-business, projects, social security and loan repayments.  |
| <b>Fee Exemptions</b>                           | Import duties, trade licences, liquor licences, tax holidays and land tax.   |
| <b>Nationality and Immigration Assistance</b>   | Passports, work permits, residency papers, nationality papers and voters registration.                                     |
| <b>Legal Support</b>                            | Legal advice, intervention with the police and payment of bail fees.   |
| <b>Personal Support and Advice</b>              | Weddings, funerals, baptisms, graduations, birthdays, mother's day and relationship problems.                              |
| <b>Government Contracts and other patronage</b> | Supplies, building, road works, cleaning and other services and media advertisements.                                      |
| <b>Entertainment</b>                            | Alcoholic beverages, concert tickets and sporting events tickets.  |
| <b>Recommendations and Referrals</b>            | For almost every good and service.   |
| <b>Other Cash Transfers</b>                     | Miscellaneous  |

*Sources: News reports and interviews conducted by author with politicians, brokers and citizens.*

Although direct cash transfers to individuals and letters of reference remain popular modes of delivery, politicians have devised transfer mechanisms of increasing sophistication. One mode, used when there has to be some

semblance of accountability, is to reach agreements with private suppliers and service providers to transfer resources indirectly to particular individuals. Generally, clients receive letters of permission (akin to vouchers) from politicians, take these to the suppliers, and receive the resources. As an example, one informant described how his pharmacy provided medicines to constituents with such letters, and then sent bills as directed by the politicians.<sup>270</sup> This mechanism is used widely for distributing more expensive and durable items such as building materials, but it is also used for apparently innocuous purposes, such as the daily distribution of tortillas.<sup>271</sup> Another mechanism used is that of taking actual bills from clients (for such things as utilities, rent, and loan payments) and organising for these to be paid on behalf of constituents. These indirect means of delivering handouts, which provide some degree of monitoring control for politicians, also expand their opportunities to tap into a wider variety of public funds. In the case of the aforementioned pharmaceutical products, for example, monthly bills are sent by the particular pharmacy to the ministry of health for payment. Like in most ministries, there is a special discretionary budget line and representatives compete for access by lobbying the relevant minister.

Another significant change in the nature of the clientelist exchange over the past 30 years is the noticeable decrease in requests for collective and non-targeted goods and services as the number of requests for individual and targeted goods and services has grown. One politician captured the overall sentiment well when he said, “In 1989, the people wanted you to assist with things like job creation, health care, education and housing for the division as a whole. If we fast-forward to 2008, it’s a totally different world. People were now asking ‘What have you done for me lately?’ It became all me, me, me...the individual.”<sup>272</sup> Another politician related, “I did do some division-wide community projects such as drains, libraries, a sport field and park. But these were not appreciated by most people. They wanted to receive things personally.”<sup>273</sup> Another told the story of organising a backyard session to try to get his

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<sup>270</sup> Interview with Constituent OW13, 18 March 2011, Orange Walk Town.

<sup>271</sup> This was observed in the Orange Walk Central constituency.

<sup>272</sup> Interview with Marin.

<sup>273</sup> Interview with Dolores Balderamos-Garcia, constituency aspirant and former minister (PUP), 11 November 2011, Belize City.

constituents to apply for technical vocational classes at the Vocational and Technical Institute. He related that people did show up and listened, but did not sign up for classes. Instead, they queued afterwards for food and drinks and to lobby for cash handouts.<sup>274</sup>

When asked what they expect from their local politicians, constituents also point to the desire for immediate and individually targeted goods and services. A constituent in Belize City expressed a common sentiment when she said, “Yes, I believe that my politician should give me free stuff...like pay my house rent and light bill. That’s why we vote for him. They promise this...and they have the money that they thieve.”<sup>275</sup> Indeed, the accusation that politicians steal and enrich themselves as justification for them giving back to the people was a common thread in constituents’ responses. Overall, although not totally absent, requests for collective goods such as streets, drains, employment generation and skills training were in the minority.

However, in addition to straight forward individual handouts at clinics, some politicians do provide various levels of constituency-level community development activities aimed at particular disadvantaged groups. These activities range from the more common one-off training events and irregular workshops to the much rarer comprehensive and longer-term educational programmes. The largest, and perhaps most notable, example of the latter is the Samuel Haynes Institute for Excellence (SHIE) initiated by Minister Wilfred Elrington, the UDP representative for the Pickstock constituency. The SHIE conducts a variety of educational and training sessions (remedial education, homework assistance, textile arts, computer instruction, and gardening) for some 200 children, unemployed youth, women and men on a daily basis. The relatively large complex in a poor neighbourhood was built on public land through private donations and actually receives international grant funding for several of its programmes. Yet one feature that the SHIE shares with similar and smaller constituency-based programmes is that it also doubles as the representative’s political constituency office that hosts weekly political clinics. As such, it is inevitable that partisan and community-development work overlap.

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<sup>274</sup> Interview with G. Smith.

<sup>275</sup> Interview with Constituent P3, 24 January 2011, Belize City.

Additionally, ways are often devised for the staff of these politician-initiated community programmes to receive salaries or stipends that come from public funds—apart from the constituency stipend.

### ***What Constitutes Political Support from Clients***

As noted previously, this study assumes a fairly broad conceptualisation of ‘political support’ that includes activities and political relationships that transcend election campaigns and voting. Importantly, it also allows for financial donations from individuals and businesses to be construed as political support. In the Belize case, the findings show that the ways in which clients promise or provide political support have also expanded. Based on the triangulation of information from interviews, news reports and observation, Table 4 summarises the key types of political support provided by clients.

**TABLE 4**  
**Key Types of Political Support Given or Promised to Politicians,**  
**circa 2011**

| <b>TYPES OF POLITICAL SUPPORT</b> |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <b>1.</b>                         | Voting or not voting in party, national and/or local elections    |
| <b>2.</b>                         | Promise of voting in party, national and/or local elections       |
| <b>3.</b>                         | Registering to vote   |
| <b>4.</b>                         | Transferring or not transferring to another constituency          |
| <b>5.</b>                         | Providing assistance to constituency-based operators              |
| <b>6.</b>                         | Attending partisan conventions and meetings                       |
| <b>7.</b>                         | Attending partisan marches and protests                           |
| <b>8.</b>                         | Providing personal security support to politician                 |
| <b>9.</b>                         | Providing ‘intelligence’ on other constituents                    |
| <b>10.</b>                        | Committing acts of mischief against opposing parties/candidates   |
| <b>11.</b>                        | Providing solidarity and crowd support to politician              |
| <b>12.</b>                        | Wearing party colours and displaying posters on property          |
| <b>13.</b>                        | Writing letters and making statements to the media                |
| <b>14.</b>                        | Calling in to a talk show to support or oppose an issue or person |
| <b>15.</b>                        | Campaigning for candidates  |
| <b>16.</b>                        | Collecting signatures for partisan petitions                      |
| <b>17.</b>                        | Donating funds to politicians                                     |

*Sources: Interviews conducted with politicians, brokers and citizens, and newspaper stories.*

The fact that most of these 17 types of political support are ‘on-going’ activities, and not limited to election periods, is testament to the year-round and day-to-day nature of the current practice of political clientelism, compared to the practice in most constituencies before independence. Several of the types of political support listed in Table 4 were negligible at the time of independence in



1981. For example, the Representation of the Peoples Act (Government of Belize, 2000) requires citizens to register in the constituencies they reside in and officially transfer constituencies with the Elections and Boundaries Department (EBD) when they move residence. However, it has become common practice for politicians to seek electoral advantage by working around this requirement. In return for not transferring registrations or giving false addresses, voters can receive various forms of compensation from instigating politicians. There is an annual opportunity for official challenges to be made to the voters' list based on residency status. However, abuses are so widespread that it is challenging for the EBD, with limited resources, to pursue most cases. The onus is therefore on political opponents to monitor each other's registering and transferring activities. In this regard, the incumbent party generally has some advantages. For example, in September 2011 the PUP candidate for Port Loyola charged that the UDP incumbent was "padding the election list...[by] the fraudulent transfer of over 140 persons in Port Loyola who have not lived in the division for even a single day."<sup>276</sup> He also accused the EBD of not processing the objections in a timely manner, resulting in them not being heard in court.<sup>277</sup>

Also new to the list of political support activities is the recent trend of clients being rewarded to make rehearsed calls to live radio and television shows to either support or oppose a particular politician, party or issue. During periods of heightened partisan activity, this produces a snowball effect as both major parties compete for getting in calls to these shows. Also, the 'renting of a crowd' by creating incentives (such as food, drinks, cash and other handouts) to attend partisan rallies or civil protests is now a regular occurrence, and both parties routinely accuse the other of this practice. For example, a 2011 news item reported on allegations that constituents of a particular minister were being rallied to attend a public House Committee consultation to show their support for the government's position on a constitutional amendment.<sup>278</sup> Not denying the allegation totally, the minister pointed to the past assistance he had given to his

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<sup>276</sup> Minister Boots' Opponent Claims Incumbent Is Padding List. (2011, September, 7). *7 News*.

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Public Consultation or Political Rally. (2011, August 8). *7 News*.

constituents—suggesting that such political support was to be expected in exchange.<sup>279</sup>

The inclusion of ‘donating funds to politicians’ as a type of political support (item #17 in Table 4) also warrants explanation. This is based on the finding that, just as persons of different income levels request somewhat different goods and services, they also give different types of political support. Middle-class clients may, for example, provide technical skills or manage a particular zone for a politician and, in return, receive primary access to scholarship assistance for their children or free import duty on a car. Similarly, wealthy individuals who donate funds to a politician or political party may also receive, in return, favours or promises of favours from politicians. Using a colourful analogy to describe these various income-based types of clientelist exchanges, one informant said:

It’s like a feeding frenzy in which there are bottom-feeders, middle-feeders and top-feeders. The bottom-feeders are the majority—the voters, poorer class—who get as much as they can. They compete for the crumbs, and election time is especially their time. The middle-feeders are the middle-class folks who get special favours—like a second piece of land, scholarships, tax-free imports and so on. The top-feeders are the individuals and business donors who fund campaigns and grease the wheels of the feeding frenzy. Of course they expect a return on their investment many times fold.<sup>280</sup>

Additionally, interviews with politicians and clients indicate that, since independence, both have improved their skills at negotiating the content of the clientelist exchange. As one politician noted, it was more common for a politician to offer assistance to the family as a household unit in the 1990s, but by 2008, a growing number of heads of households were negotiating with politicians based on the number of individual voters in the home or family.<sup>281</sup> Another politician recounted, “One person actually came to me saying ‘I have 12 voters in my house. Give us \$100 per person and you’ll have our vote’”<sup>282</sup> On the other side of the exchange, a single mother in the Pickstock constituency who claimed not to be getting enough attention from politicians lamented, “The politician they stupid because I have six votes [in my house] that I can deliver for them. If they give me a house and fix each of us up...any of them can get the votes...but they have to deliver.”<sup>283</sup> Overall, the discussions with citizens

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<sup>279</sup> Ibid.

<sup>280</sup> Interview with Leslie. He informed that he heard this description being used by a retired politician.

<sup>281</sup> Interview with Briceño.

<sup>282</sup> Interview with Singh.

<sup>283</sup> Interview with Constituent P3, 24 January 2011, Belize City.

indicate that votes are increasingly viewed as a valuable commodity that can be bartered or auctioned to willing politicians in a context in which handout politics is such a big game in town.

### ***Assessing the Costs of Clinic Operations***

Because of the informal and sometimes illicit nature of clientelist practices, it proved difficult to assess the monetary values of handouts. Most politicians claim that they do not keep financial records of their clinic operations. Yet it can be justifiably assumed that if the numbers of clients increase, and if the types and volume of resources given as handouts increase, then the total monetary value also grows. As a former politician contended, “The bulk of political financing is consumed even before elections roll around...on funerals, graduation, textbooks, summer programmes for children, house rent, medical bills, utility bills (including cable television) and home repairs” (Smith, 2007: 2). Examples of amounts that active politicians report paying for specific handouts to individuals include: \$300 per semester for school fees, \$40 for monthly cable television, \$30 for weekly cell phone top-ups and \$100 to \$200 for birthday gifts. By 2010/2011, the ‘going rate’ for direct cash transfers for miscellaneous purposes averaged \$100-\$300 per month outside of election campaign periods. However, there is still not enough information available to calculate totals by adding up individual estimates of such handouts. As with the numbers for clients, one approach to this challenge is to estimate how much politicians report they spend overall for clinic operations.

Fourteen of the 23 active politicians interviewed for this study agreed to estimate the monthly financial costs of clinic operations proper in a non-election year. The estimates they provided ranged from \$6,000 to \$15,000 per month per constituency, with an overall average of circa \$9,000.<sup>284</sup> Using these estimates to calculate an annual estimate, the range is \$72,000 to \$180,000 per year, or an average of circa \$108,000 per constituency per year. Clearly, the expenditure for clinic operations expands dramatically in an election year. Griner and Zovatto (2005: 13) estimated that the cost of a constituency

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<sup>284</sup> The \$9,000 figure was derived by adding up the 14 separate estimates from the politicians and dividing by 14. It is likely that some of the lower figures given are deliberate underestimates. For example, one politician claimed to be spending significantly less per month on clinic operations than his monthly constituency transfer from the government for constituency support.

campaign in Belize increased from \$50,000 at independence to over \$900,000 in 2005. Smith estimated that his 2008 election campaign cost over \$1,000,000.<sup>285</sup> When asked what a politician actually expends per vote received in an average constituency campaign, responses from active politicians ranged from \$200-\$400. These estimates would amount to circa \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 per constituency if an average of 2,500 voters (circa half of the average total in a constituency) is employed. Clearly, apart from the costs of handouts to voters, politicians spend these funds on other costs, not the least of which is advertising. Yet the election year expenditure figures provide further indication of the huge amounts of funds needed for clientelist operations. Just using estimates that politicians provided for a non-election year, and assuming that that 55 constituency clinics are operational, the total annual expenditures would range from \$3,960,000 to \$9,900,000 per year, with an estimated average of circa \$5,940,000.

### ***Procuring Resources for Handouts***

The above discussion of the costs of clientelist operations indicates that the demands are high on representatives and political candidates to procure adequate financing to make their clinic networks competitive. So where do the funds come from? As it is to be expected, politicians unanimously concur that there are three basic sources: their own personal funds, private financing and public funds and services. Overall, the interviews suggest that personal financing, which was the key source before the 1990s, has decreased dramatically in comparison to the other two sources. For most active politicians interviewed, personal funds were the least used source of financing, and several went far as to say that they never touch their own money. One former politician, who did use his own funds, lamented that “it bled me” and that he considered this one of the key reasons he left electoral politics.<sup>286</sup> The minority of others who conceded that they used substantial amounts of personal funds tend to be independently wealthy or new to electoral politics.

On the other hand, there was strong agreement among those politicians interviewed that private funding of clinic networks has sky-rocketed since

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<sup>285</sup> Interview with G. Smith.

<sup>286</sup> Interview with Young.

independence. Not unexpectedly, politicians were generally reluctant to discuss specific private funding sources, preferring to use generic terms such as 'friends', 'business colleagues' and 'wealthy supporters'.<sup>287</sup> One former politician, who had no qualms about revealing his sources, stated:

In terms of private donations, there are two groups of donors: the 'big ten' richest ones and the thousands of smaller donors. I got most of my funds from two of the richest men in Belize—[Barry] Bowen and Ashcroft...directly to me. Big donors also give to the party, and then the party shares this among candidates at election time based in part on the size of their constituencies.<sup>288</sup>

Based on information from politicians interviewed for this study and from news reports, apart from Ashcroft and Barry Bowen,<sup>289</sup> the bigger donors include national and foreign owners of the larger companies in import-based merchandising, in the agricultural-export sector and in the 'new' tourism sector. Smaller business interests, including more recent Indian and Taiwanese investors, are also believed to have 'donations for favours' relationships with political parties. Additionally, there has been some speculation that foreign investors in the even newer oil sector (post-2005) have begun to make campaign contributions and that proceeds from the drug trade have begun to enter into the realm of political party and/or politician financing.<sup>290</sup> Although a small number of business entities are known to be more linked to either the PUP or UDP, the conventional wisdom is that the majority of private donors have contributed to both parties (or to politicians in both parties) over time. This has indeed been the case with Ashcroft and Bowen.

This account of sources for private funds is corroborated by the finding of Griner and Zovatto (2005: 13) that the millions of dollars required for national campaigns come largely from a small number of big business donors. The pertinent point is that some of these private funds, whether they are donated during or outside of campaign periods, help to fund clientelist politics. In this regard, former prime minister Esquivel was sober in his reflection that, "Patronage is dependent on the finances and financial bribery of the very rich

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<sup>287</sup> As discussed later in Chapter 4, there are no legal requirements for campaign financing disclosure.

<sup>288</sup> Interview with G. Smith.

<sup>289</sup> Sir Barry Bowen (who died in 2010) was considered one of Belize's richest nationals. Over the years, he expanded his business interests from bottling (soft drinks and beer) to a variety of other areas. His sons now manage the Bowen group of companies.

<sup>290</sup> The latter issue of drug trade linkages is discussed in Chapter 4 (section three).

few. This was once minimal but is now huge. These unelected few decide much of the actions of government.”<sup>291</sup>

However, the interviews reveal that public funds, including international grants and loans, have kept growing as a key source of financing—to become the primary source—for incumbent politicians, as well as one important source for elected representatives of the opposition. One primary public funding source is the aforementioned constituency stipend, denoted ‘Grants to Constituencies’ and listed under the Office of the Prime Minister in the most recent national budgets (2008 to 2012). These funds are allocated on the discretion of Cabinet, and no financial reporting is required once funds have been transferred to personal bank accounts<sup>292</sup>—a departure from the normal accounting procedures for disbursements of public funds. A total of \$1,572,000 was allocated as grants to constituencies in the national budget for FY 2011-2012 (Ministry of Finance, 2011: 100). This averages out to \$50,710 per year for each of the 31 representatives, or \$4,225 per month. Interviews with politicians indicate that some of them receive significantly more than this monthly amount because larger constituencies generally receive more, because certain representatives are favoured, and/or because other budget lines are used to supplement these basic funds.<sup>293</sup>

Additionally, since the 1990s there has been a trend toward increasing proportions of the budgets for government ministries being allocated on a discretionary basis through representatives and candidates of the ruling party. Smith, who experienced the system firsthand as a minister, explained how this process generally works:

The budgets of every government department and every statutory body...such as the Belize Tourism Board...are targeted and ways are found to use some of these funds to assist your people. You lobby ministers and send over a list of your people who will get assistance. If you are on a statutory body, you create some credible sounding project for needy people and use it to help ‘your’ people.<sup>294</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Interview with Esquivel. Some of the implications of donations from wealthy supporters are investigated in Chapter 4.

<sup>292</sup> Personal communication with Yvette Alvarez, Financial Advisor, Ministry of Finance, 4 March 2012.

<sup>293</sup> For example, the coordinator of the Collet constituency office, which doubles as an educational centre, is also on the pay-roll of the Ministry of Education. The \$2,000 plus monthly rental for this office also comes from this ministry’s budget. (Interview with Faith Babb, coordinator of Collet UDP constituency office and former UDP minister (UDP), 31 January 2011, Belize City; and interview with Faber).

<sup>294</sup> Interview with G. Smith.

One source that has been frequently targeted by politicians in both parties when in power is that of projects for hurricane relief. Generally, these funds have to be disbursed quickly and sometimes generate public controversy related to accusations of partisan preferences and lack of accountability.<sup>295</sup> However, as Smith and most interviewees agree, the biggest pot of discretionary funds is the budget of the Ministry of Education.

The Ministry of Education receives over 20 per cent of the total annual government budget—some \$191,919,245 in FY 2011-2012—and does indeed have the largest proportion of any ministry's budget that is disbursed by ministerial discretion (Ministry of Finance, 2011a: 27). Because of how the budget lines are disguised, it is difficult to calculate the exact amounts in this regard, but common estimates are around 10 per cent of the total budget.<sup>296</sup> One portion of this that is not disguised is under the budget line 'Grants to Individuals', which appears regularly in the budget. For example, \$3,168,216 was allocated as grants to individuals for secondary schools in FY 2011-2012 (Ministry of Finance, 2011a: 262). The Cabinet and Minister of Education decide how these funds are to be disbursed. Since 2008, for example, constituency representatives have been allocated a fixed share of the ministry's discretionary budget, and they select which of their individual constituents will receive educational subsidies by sending a list of names of constituents to the ministry.<sup>297</sup> Although the ministry claims that recipients are still means-tested, it does not deny that constituents need to visit their representatives to get on lists and to be in the system.<sup>298</sup> Other ministries with smaller budgets, such as those with responsibility for housing, health and human development, also have budget lines reserved for similar kinds of discretionary spending. If not allocated directly to politicians for dispensing to individuals at the constituency level, politicians compete to ensure that they are the ones to make the decisions on exactly who in their constituencies will be on lists to receive such funds.

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<sup>295</sup> See, for example, the Auditor General's findings on irregularities in the expenditure of project funds after Hurricane Dean in 2007 (Office of the Auditor General, 2011: 49).

<sup>296</sup> Interview with G. Smith and Interview with Faber.

<sup>297</sup> Interview with Faber.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

It is important to note that assisting individual constituents comes in forms other than direct or indirect monetary transfers. Politicians from parties in power have significant discretionary influence over the distribution of public service and project jobs and a wide array of government resources, benefits, services, licences and fee waivers.<sup>299</sup> For example, the minister responsible for lands has total discretionary authority in deciding exactly who will receive land grants and leases, and the entire land distribution system—at the level of the public service, constituencies, municipalities and villages—is dominated by appointees of the party in power (Political Reform Commission, 2000: 50). Similarly, the minister of immigration can grant waivers related to certain nationality matters, the minister of local government can veto decisions on the granting of liquor licences, the minister of finance can grant certain categories of import duty exemptions and the minister of public works can decide exactly which village will get a paved street in a particular neighbourhood.

In terms of jobs, the public sector (including employees in the public service, security services, statutory bodies and public sector projects) is still the single biggest employer. In 2011, it employed over 15 per cent of the total labour force, or some 20,000 workers (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2011: 15). In 2004, the public service<sup>300</sup> proper had circa 8,123 employees (excluding 3,648 teachers),<sup>301</sup> of which 2,148, or 25 per cent, were estimated to be open vote workers (Management Audit Team, 2004: 3). In 2012, the ministry of the public service reported that there were 9,031 employees (excluding some 5,000 teachers) in the public service, of which 2,327, or 26 per cent, were open vote workers.<sup>302</sup> When the totals for other temporary/contract employees are added to the open vote total, some 39 per cent of the public service was in the non-permanent category in 2012. Overall, since the 1990s, incumbent politicians of

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<sup>299</sup> See the report of the PRC (2000: 65, 72 and 111) for a discussion of concerns about the extensive nature and the increasing abuse of such discretionary powers of ministers.

<sup>300</sup> The main categories of employees in the public service are 'permanent establishment', 'open vote', 'contract' and 'temporary/short-term'. It is important to note that the posts of open vote workers are "not provided for under any Personal Emoluments of any Head of Expenditure" in the annual budget (1992: 176).

<sup>301</sup> The Management Audit Team (2004: 2-4) reported that an accurate total was not possible to determine due to poor record keeping, especially in relation to temporary workers. As noted, although most teachers' salaries are paid by government, almost all fall under church managed schools.

<sup>302</sup> Personal communication with McNab. McNab informed that in the past no formal record of the open vote category was kept but that the numbers has been determined from time to time for particular purposes.



both parties have expanded the practice of disbursing public service jobs, resources and favours in a manner that enhances their political support from people of all income levels.

Finally, a relatively recent element in the expansion of political clientelism is the gradual formal inclusion of elected representatives of the Opposition as fund recipients in a limited, but not insignificant, manner. In addition to being included in the on-going constituency stipend for all 31 representatives, the 2008-2012 UDP government added opposition PUP representatives to at least two other significant public sector programmes. The first is the aforementioned educational assistance quota programme of the Ministry of Education, from which opposition representatives receive access to funds for onward distribution to their constituents. The second is the one-off housing grant scheme administered by the Ministry of Housing in 2009-2010, which disbursed \$18,000,000 of the recovered Venezuela grant funds. The process was similar: opposition representatives received access to housing grant funds, more or less proportionate to the size of their constituencies, and sent names of recipients to the ministry.<sup>303</sup> On the surface, these inclusions of opposition representatives may seem to reflect some degree of democratic maturity and fairness in public fund disbursement, and a small move away from divisive and spiteful partisan politics. However, these developments are more likely to be further indications of the normalisation of clientelist transfers, to the extent that the PUP and the UDP seem to be forging a mutual understanding to award each other similar treatment of access to some public funds for use in clinic operations when in opposition.

## **Conclusion**

By the time of the sixth post-independence election in 2008, it must have been patently clear to astute politicians in both the PUP and UDP that, although electoral success is not always guaranteed, enough of the electorate will play the handout game to make it almost obligatory for a successful politician. The realpolitik of Prime Minister Barrow is insightful here: “A politician would be a

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<sup>303</sup> Interview with Lawrence Sylvester, CEO, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2 March 2011, Belmopan.

fool if he did not feel that, in return for trying to help, he will try to extract loyalty and political support. The fact is that whether he gets that support or not, he has to try.”<sup>304</sup> In other words, handout politics had become so entrenched 30 years after independence that not playing the game is likely to guarantee electoral defeat in a constituency—and, by extension, in a general election. Indeed, the most successful individual politicians have been those who excel at political clientelism in their particular constituencies.<sup>305</sup> These are likely the same politicians who would argue that in small constituencies, which can often be won by margins of under 100 votes, getting at least 1,000 of 5,000 voters to promise their political support is on balance worth all the effort when winning is the goal of the game.

Taken altogether, the empirical evidence presented in this chapter on the manifestations and operational features of political clientelism substantiates its rampant expansion and entrenchment in the 1990s and thereafter. Based on the estimate of 860 monthly political interactions between politicians and clients in each constituency, and assuming that at least 55 full-time clinics operate annually, there would be some 567,600 potentially clientelist interactions per year. In short, political clientelism has shifted from being a quaint and occasional political tactic used by pre-independence politicians to a part of daily political life. This sea change in clientelist politics from 1980/1981 to 2011 is clearly illustrated in Table 5 by a summary comparison of the nine tracer markers prioritised for this study.

**TABLE 5**  
**Comparative Status of Political Clientelism at 1980/1981 and in 2011**

| <b>TRACER MARKER</b>                                       | <b>STATUS IN 1980/81</b>  | <b>STATUS IN 2011</b>  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Number and geographical spread of political clinics</b> | Few regular ones aside from the two Price clinics. Most others were campaign-related and temporary in nature. | Some 55 regular year-round clinics by both parties in the 31 constituencies and 62 at election time. Most operate daily and have paid staff and brokers. Clinic activity is now a common feature of intra-party conventions. |
| <b>Numbers and profiles of clients</b>                     | Difficult to assess, but relatively few and mostly limited to urban areas and especially Belize City.         | Twenty per cent of a constituency is estimated to be involved in clientelist relationships. Although all groups are represented, the majority are poor and over 50 per cent are women.                                       |

<sup>304</sup> Interview with Barrow.

<sup>305</sup> Examples of these are addressed in Chapter 4.

| <b>TRACER MARKER</b>   | <b>STATUS IN 1980/81</b>   | <b>STATUS IN 2011</b>  |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Types of and volume of goods and services going to clients</b>                | Jobs, agricultural land, house lots, house construction and repairs, healthcare and educational assistance, microcredit, as well as small amounts of monies for basic daily needs.             | In addition to the 1980/81 list, almost every good and service is tradable (See Table 3) and here are more categories and sub-categories   |
| <b>Monetary value of goods and services</b>                                      | Difficult to assess, but estimated to be limited. Direct cash transfers were mostly under \$15 per person <sup>306</sup> and election campaign costs were mostly below \$10,000.               | Per month clinic operational costs in a non-election year are estimated to be at least \$9,000. This estimate does not include the value of most resources coming from public sources. Constituency campaigns are estimated to cost around \$1,000,000 and cash transfers range from \$100-\$300 per person.   |
| <b>Types of political support going to politician</b>                            | Largely limited to party membership, attending rallies, voting, voluntary support and wearing party colours at election time.  | Seventeen options identified in Table 4. The majority are on-going and transcend election campaign periods. Volunteering is negligible as most party workers are now paid in cash or in-kind.  |
| <b>Extent of distribution of public resources for party/clientelist purposes</b> | The practice was clearly observable countrywide but relatively it was limited in comparison to non-targeted allocation. The constituency stipend was established as a source of handout funds. | This practice has become rampant and increasingly institutionalised. Almost every ministry and statutory body has a fund, programme or authority that is used to direct resources and favours as rewards or inducements to constituents of representatives. This practice has also spread to local government. |
| <b>Ratio of permanent/temporary public service jobs</b>                          | Less than two per cent were in the open vote category.   | Circa 25/26 per cent of public service jobs are in the open vote category. Overall, 39 per cent are in a non-permanent category.   |
| <b>Extent of references to clientelism in news stories and other documents</b>   | News reports were very rare and mostly focused on reporting on court cases. References in academic studies were scarce.  | News reporting is regular and voluminous. Academic references are more numerous but still limited. References in official reports are now significant.   |
| <b>Number of alleged cases of voter bribery taken to court</b>                   | Five cases before independence.  | One case between 1981 and 2011.  |

In particular, the prevalence of full-time political clinics in all constituencies by both the PUP and the UDP, the high costs of these clinics, the increase in the use of private financing, the extent to which public resources are being targeted for clientelist purposes, the percentage of citizens who have become clients, and the normality that characterises clientelist politician-citizen relationships, all indicate that political clientelism had indeed become deeply entrenched in the

<sup>306</sup> Based on inflation figures that averaged 3.4 per cent per year between 1980 and 2010, \$15 would be worth around \$30 in 2010 (<http://www.tradingeconomics.com/belize/inflation-average-imf-data.html>).

Belize of 2011. Using the terminology of the resource flow depicted in Figure 2 in the Introduction, by 2011 informal and targeted clientelist exchanges between politicians and citizens (red arrows) had expanded and become the norm for at least a one-fifth of the electorate. To sustain clientelist flows to citizens, the PUP and UDP and their politicians strategised to ensure that an increasing portion of public resources from government sources flowed through them (green arrows). Additionally, both parties and their politicians also established closer relationships with private financiers (purple arrows), in part to help supplement the increasing demand for targeted resources from a larger electorate that was now more seasoned in the handout game.

Importantly, the profile of 'the client' has become more multi-layered and overlapping since independence. The poor remain the largest proportion, but that of middle-class clients has grown. Although clientelist politics have continued to transcend gender, ethnicity, race, religion and geography; Latino immigrants and their children have become a significant 'new' proportion of clients, and that of women has grown. Moreover, as client numbers have increased overall, the distinction between an inner core of more seasoned, habitual clients and an outer core of more transient clients has become more noticeable. As the proportion of the electorate participating in informal clientelist relationships has expanded, so has the sophistication of "grassroots diplomacy"<sup>307</sup> to barter political support for resources. During the 30 years after independence, a new 'political normal', based on clientelism, was consolidated in the relationships among politicians and citizens, politicians and the state, and politicians and private interests.

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<sup>307</sup> This term is borrowed from Fernández-Kelly (2006: 14).

# CHAPTER 3

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## **EXPLAINING THE RISE OF POLITICAL CLIENTELISM: The 1990s to 2011**

### **Introduction**

By the thirtieth anniversary of its independence in 2011, Belize had witnessed a first decade of slow growth of political clientelism, followed by two decades of its exponential expansion and deepening entrenchment. This rapid expansion after the 1990s transpired at the same time Belize was experiencing a wider post-independence trend of democratic contradictions. On the one hand, Belize continued to garner international praise for its electoral and procedural successes as a liberal democracy. Free and fair elections in 1993, 1998, 2003 and 2008, with average voter turnout of over 75 per cent,<sup>308</sup> were split equally between the PUP and UDP. An active civil society sector initiated intense debate and some legal reforms of Belize's inherited Westminster parliamentary system. Moreover, Belize continued to avoid ethnicised party politics while integrating tens of thousands of immigrants and to exhibit a generally sound record on the protection of civil liberties.

On the other hand, the worrying trends in Belize's practice of democracy have intensified since the 1990s. Apart from being among the three states with the lowest WGI scores in the Caribbean region between 1998 and 2008, Belize dropped precipitously from a rank of 46 in 2003, to 60 in 2004, 62 in 2005, 66 in 2006, 99 in 2007 and 109 (of 180 states) in 2008 in the Corruption Perception Index (CPI).<sup>309</sup> Additionally, a spate of national assessments of governance in

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<sup>308</sup> The International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance ranked Belize at number 49 of 140 states (2010) when turnout is measured as a percentage of total voting population ([http://www.idea.int/vt/survey/voter\\_turnout\\_pop2-2.cfm](http://www.idea.int/vt/survey/voter_turnout_pop2-2.cfm)).

<sup>309</sup> Although widely used as a cross-national comparator of public corruption since 1995, it is important to note that, as the term implies, the CPI is a blunt measure of subjective perceptions of the extent of corruption. The data sources for the CPI are a number of regional and international agencies (numbering 13 in 2012) that specialise in business climate and governance analysis. These agencies generally ask a small number of local and international business persons and analysts about their perceptions of corruption in a particular country and index these data for a comparative ranking. At least three data sources are needed for a country to be included. Generally, there is a lag of one-two years in the data employed to calculate the CPI. Belize was first included in the CPI in 2003, but it has not been included in

the 1990s and thereafter, exposed other growing concerns about democratic practices in Belize.<sup>310</sup> These include, among others, concerns about the increasing centralisation and politicisation of government institutions, the entrenchment of ‘tribally’ competitive two-party politics, the total absence of laws to regulate campaign financing and a weak public service. The first two chapters of this thesis confirmed that political clientelism has evolved since the 1990s to become a key component of these on-going contradictions in Belize’s process of democratisation. This chapter explores the causes.

As argued in Chapter 1, the emergence of political clientelism before the 1990s was fuelled by the convergence of nascent competitive party politics and the assuming of the powers of state in a context of inadequate responses to on-going poverty and inequality. In addition to these basic supporting conditions, a number of country-specific features were ‘Belizeanising’ the manner and texture of political clientelism. It is important to ask whether the momentum for clientelist politics from this earlier period, by itself, accounts for the rapid proliferation of the phenomenon in the 1990s and thereafter. In addressing this question, this chapter explores the extent to which new developments, related not only to the basic supporting conditions but also to other aspects of Belize’s societal context, accelerated the rate of expansion in the 1990s. In particular, country-specific developments related to the Westminster political system, social challenges, the economy, demography and small size are updated and further incorporated to provide a comprehensive analysis of the causes of the rampant expansion of political clientelism. These explanatory variables are approached as inter-linked and, at times, reinforcing in practice.

## **The Relevance of Political Developments**

### ***The Political Consequences of Demographic Changes***

Although not affecting its status as a small-state, Belize’s population growth from 189,392 in 1990, to 240,204 in 2000 (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2007: 14) and 312,698 in 2010 (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2011: 46), has relevance

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the index since 2008 because two of the three agencies that had reported on Belize suspended surveys on the country. (<http://www.transparency.org/>).

<sup>310</sup> Apart from the report of the PRC (2000), see assessments from SPEAR (1996) and the Public Sector Reform Council (2000), and the Report on Governance Improvement (2003).

for political clientelism. The average population per electoral constituency increased from about 6,750 in 1990 to 10,100 in 2010, and the average number of registered voters per constituency, which was around 2,300 at the time of the first post-independence election in 1984, grew from some 3,000 in 1990 to some 5,231 in 2010.<sup>311</sup> This growth does not change the fact that even the average of 5,231 is relatively tiny and still supportive of highly personalised political relationships. However, larger constituency populations are proportionally important for the expansion of clientelism because they translate into more potential voters, more potential hands for handouts and therefore the need for more resources for clientelist networks.

As the overall population was increasing, Belize's ethnic mix continued to undergo significant changes, as illustrated in Table 6.

**TABLE 6**  
**Belize Population Breakdown by Ethnicity, 1980 - 2010**  
**by Percentages of Population Share**

| <b>ETHNIC GROUP</b>    | <b>1980</b> | <b>1991</b> | <b>2000</b> | <b>2010</b> |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>Creole</b>          | 40          | 30          | 25          | 21          |
| <b>Mestizo</b>         | 33          | 44          | 48          | 50          |
| <b>Maya</b>            | 10          | 11          | 11          | 10          |
| <b>Garifuna</b>        | 8           | 7           | 6           | 5           |
| <b>East Indian</b>     | 2           | 3           | 3           | 3           |
| <b>Mennonite</b>       | 3           | 3           | 4           | 4           |
| <b>Other</b>           | 4           | 2           | 3           |             |
| <b>Mixed Ethnicity</b> |             |             |             | 6           |

*Sources: Central Statistical Office (1981) for 1980, Statistical Institute of Belize (2012: 27) for 1991 and 2000, and Statistical Institute of Belize (2011: 2-3) for 2010.*

*Note: Figures are rounded to match rounded figures from 1991 and 2000 and do not add exactly to 100 for all years. 'Other' includes Caucasian and Chinese, among others. The labels 'Creole' and 'Mestizo' refer to mixed ethnicities and create some ambiguity in self-identifying during census surveys. 'Mixed Ethnicity' was added as a label for the first time in the 2010 census.*

The most notable of these shifts have been the further proportional decreases in the Creole population (from 40 per cent in 1980, to 30 per cent in 1991, to 21 per cent in 2010) and the concurrent increases in the Mestizo population (from 33 per cent, to 44 per cent, to 50 per cent, respectively). Higher emigration

<sup>311</sup> Elections and Boundaries Commission (<http://www.elections.gov.bz/>).

rates in the 1980s, mostly to the United States,<sup>312</sup> and lower birth rates among Creoles have contributed to the decrease in their share of the population. However, the other significant reason for the change in ethnic mix is the immigration of Latinos from other Central America states in the 1980s and 1990s (Bulmer-Thomas and Bulmer-Thomas, 2012: 154-155). Although political immigration had slowed by the 1990s, continued economic immigration, coupled with the higher birth rates of past immigrants, contributed to the increase of Mestizos and new immigrants as proportions of the population. As one indicator, the 2010 census found that of the 14.8 per cent (46,000) of the total population that was foreign-born, 62 per cent had arrived before 2000, mostly from Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2011: 20). This figure of 46,000 foreign-born residents does not include the tens of thousands of children born as Belizeans to the new immigrants or the totality of illegal immigration. Additionally, the fact that most immigrants have settled in rural areas helps to explain much about why Belize stands out as one of the few countries in Central America and the Caribbean that exhibits a near 50-50 balance in its urban to rural population, and why the rural-based population has increased since 1990.

Although almost all 31 electoral constituencies are still characterised by a clear ethnic group majority, a review of census figures by ethnicity and district indicates that by 2010 the majorities were no longer as dominant in some constituencies as in the 1980s.<sup>313</sup> This has been due in large part to internal migration of members of some ethnic groups who seek to enhance access to land, housing and jobs. However, a key reason has been that settlement patterns of new immigrants has resulted in some constituencies with higher proportions of Latino residents. Immigrants have increased as a share of the population in every constituency and especially in those of the high-settlement districts of Cayo and Stann Creek.<sup>314</sup> For example, by 2010 the Belmopan

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<sup>312</sup> See Vernon (1990) and Straughan (2007) for analysis of the extent and causes of these emigration movements. Straughan (2007: 270) estimates that circa 2007 between 110,000 to 120,000 Belizeans were in the United States, 30 per cent of whom were born there.

<sup>313</sup> Voting registration data are not disaggregated by ethnicity. The statements here are based on a review of post-independence district census data by ethnicity, politician interviews and personal observation.

<sup>314</sup> Because many new immigrants appear 'ethnically' similar to the long-existing Mestizo and Maya populations, ethnic-based comparisons can be complicated. Indeed, many Mestizo-Belizeans in the north of Belize make a point of distinguishing themselves from new Latino and Maya immigrants.



constituency, which was majority Creole in the 1980s and 1990s, had a near-equal balance between Creoles and Mestizo-Maya residents, due largely to international and internal migration. The relevant implication for political clientelism is that, by the 1990s, enough years had passed for thousands of immigrants to apply for Belizean citizenship and become eligible to register as voters. Both their numbers and their relative economic vulnerabilities ensured that they became potential political clients for both political parties.<sup>315</sup>

### ***Westminster and the Role of Centralised Public Institutions***

During the step-by-step tutelage process from internal self-government in 1964 to independence in 1981, local leaders had gained increasing, and then full, control of the powers of state, including all public and international policy. The change of government in 1984 had given the UDP a first chance at the levers of state. By 1998, after four alternations in government, the two parties were well-versed in administering the extensive powers granted to political victors in the Westminster parliamentary system. In particular, the parties further perfected the art of using the political institutions under their control for partisan advantage, and developing creative strategies of increasing such control. This pattern is observable at every level of government, including at the very top of the hierarchy of political power.

At the macro-political level, the extensive powers that victorious political parties and politicians already exercise over the institutions of government under Westminster are difficult to exaggerate. They include the power to influence the filling of public service appointments of key senior managers, the appointment of the majority of the executive leadership of all public institutions and statutory bodies, the administration of departments of government, the use of extensive discretionary decision-making powers and wide authority to enact new policies and laws. In both design and practice, the governance and electoral systems are 'winner takes all' models. The opposition party is virtually without real power—even when winning the popular vote, but losing the election, as the PUP did in 1993. Even when a law requires that the opposition party make

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<sup>315</sup> The normal naturalisation process requires proof of legal residency status for five years, among other requirements.

appointments to public bodies, these all have built-in majorities for the ruling party.<sup>316</sup>

Despite these already extensive powers, Belizean governments have devised ways to amplify their control over policy making and resource distribution. As a case in point, it has become regular practice for ruling parties to appoint more than half of the House of Representatives to cabinet. For example, Prime Minister Dean Barrow followed this tradition in 2008 when he appointed 21 of the 25 UDP representatives to cabinet as ministers and/or ministers of state—meaning that the cabinet made up more than half of the 31 member House of Representatives.<sup>317</sup> Although the constitution (section 41.2.a) prohibits the appointment of more than two-thirds of the elected members of the majority party in the House to cabinet as ministers, ministers of state sit in cabinet and have ministerial portfolios.<sup>318</sup> The consequence of the practice is a de facto fusion of executive and legislative powers and the emasculation of constitutionally provided checks and balances. Such concentrated power at the top of the governance hierarchy has facilitated increased partisan control over the formal institutions of resource allocation located in the ministries and departments of government below.

The processes of public service hiring provide useful insights into this phenomenon. Even though governing parties already have majority appointment powers over most key posts, creative strategies have been devised to augment this authority. The discontinuation of the Westminster tradition of permanent secretaries—as career public officers heading the ministries of government (and indeed de facto deputy ministers)—is an instructive example. Constitutional amendments in 2001 eliminated the post of ‘permanent secretary’ and replaced it with that of Chief Executive Officer (CEO) as the most senior officer in the public service (Constitution of Belize, section 48). In practice, CEOs are contract officers serving at the pleasure of the

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<sup>316</sup> Constitutionally, the Leader of the Opposition only has the authority to make minority appointments to a small number of public bodies. One of the very few circumstances in which an opposition party can wield some power is when the ruling party does not have the two-thirds or three-fourths majority in parliament required to amend the Constitution without opposition member support.

<sup>317</sup> After the 2012 election, all of the 17 elected UDP representatives were appointed as ministers (11) and/or ministers of state (six). Four ministers were appointed through the Senate.

<sup>318</sup> This two-thirds rule was one of the several constitutional amendments made by the PUP government in 2001.

minister and party in power, and they change with transitions of government. As intended, these critically important posts have been increasingly filled by trusted partisans—turning the original intent of having an independent and permanent public service on its head. The relevant point is that CEOs have been generally more apt to facilitate activities related to political clientelism than were permanent secretaries under the inherited British model.

Additionally, there has been increasing control by incumbent politicians over who gets hired in the rest of the public service. Although the law requires that all permanent public service hiring be approved by the Public Service Commission (PSC), ministers can influence which persons are nominated to fill posts. These nominations are seldom rejected.<sup>319</sup> This is largely because the PSC, which is (in effect) appointed by the prime minister of the time,<sup>320</sup> has itself become more politicised (Political Reform Commission, 2000: 98-99). More onerous, however, is the growth since the 1990s in the number of open vote and other temporary workers as a percentage of total public service officers. In this regard, the CEO in Ministry of the Public Service informed that:

The open vote element has, traditionally, been between 2 to 5 per cent of the permanent establishment, up to early 1990s. During this period, the Government Workers' Regulations, which governs the status of these officers, was strictly adhered to; that is, they were recruited for a specific period of time for a particular job and then released. Since the mid-1990s this has changed and the size of this category of officers has seen a steady increase.<sup>321</sup>

When in government, both major parties have hired non-permanent workers on short-term contracts, the majority of which are not required to go through the formal PSC employment process. As indicated, the number of non-permanent public officers has increased steadily to some 39 per cent of all public officers, two-thirds of whom are open vote workers. As with the case of the CEOs, open vote workers are subject to wholesale dismissal as the party in government changes. Even though both major political parties engage in this practice, when in opposition they lambast the governing party with accusations of rampant patronage and victimisation, and when in government they defend the practice. For example, when a PUP representative (in the House of Representatives)

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<sup>319</sup> Interview with Gibson.

<sup>320</sup> The exact process is appointment by the Governor-General on advice of prime minister, after consultation with Leader of the Opposition (Constitution of Belize, section 105.2).

<sup>321</sup> Personal communication with McNab.

accused the UDP government of partisan dismissals after the 2008 election, Prime Minister Barrow responded with a dose of realpolitik:

Mr. Speaker, there are those supporters of the UDP that have [been] punished for 10 long years. They [PUP] complain that we are getting rid of open-vote workers. I want to make clear that our supporters are giving us hell for not getting rid of enough of those workers...so that they, who have been in this punitive wilderness for 10 long years, can finally have a chance at a job and at earning a livelihood. So no apologies will be made from this side of the House (House of Representatives, 25 July, 2008).

The rewarding of partisan supporters with public service jobs is also a tactic aimed at placing more trusted partisans in control of all levels of the key institutions of resource allocation. As noted, the ministries that have control over the resources that are most traded in clientelist exchanges are those responsible for education, health, housing, land, social development, immigration and public utilities. The levels of control exercised over these ministries by parties in power since independence facilitate clientelist targeting of more services and programmes to supporters and potential supporters. Significantly, within existing discretionary procedures, ministers and representatives can make or influence decisions about which constituency, community, group and/or individual receives goods and services, fee waivers and contracts. For instance, the aforementioned immigration example highlights the extent and abuse of control that incumbent politicians have over the issuance of work permits, residency permits and naturalisations, with the aim of gaining political favour with the large immigrant community. Other examples, such as the 2011 Christmas Assistance Programme, point to the deliberate increase of control through the introduction of one-off strategies and new budget lines that further increase discretionary decision-making, which facilitate clientelist practices. Even though the processing of the disbursement or service may go through the normal operational system of the ministry in question, the decisions on who gets what are increasingly influenced by politicians of the ruling party.<sup>322</sup>

The extent of control over public institutions that governing political parties exercise in Belize is akin to what Stokes and Medina (2002) referred to as a 'political monopoly' over resource allocation by incumbents. They (2002: 17-18)

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<sup>322</sup> As indicated, there are a small number of ministerial assistance programmes that can be accessed by opposition representatives, but these are not based on legislation and exist at the pleasure of the government in power.

contended that such monopoly situations tend to promote clientelism in that targeted allocations to individuals and specific groups (as opposed to non-targeted allocations) through the state's formal institutions can enhance the "incumbent patron's advantage over any challenger". As such, in intensely competitive political contexts characterised by high degrees of dominant control of the political economy, incumbents have less incentive to distribute resources through effective, non-targeted and needs-based state-run programmes. The pertinent point here is that the near-monopoly control over institutions of resource allocation in Belize's practice of Westminster government has facilitated and fuelled clientelism. In intensely competitive electoral contexts, this gives an incentive to politicians to seek even more control of resource allocation for clientelist purposes such that the line between cause and effect is often difficult to detect.

### ***The Principal Role of Competitive Party Politics***

The grand reward of controlling the extensive powers of the state, and so avoiding the times of political drought in powerless opposition, is clearly central to the competitive impetus to increase the use of political clientelism as a strategy to win elections—and to stay in power once there. As a prominent business leader observed (Menzies, 2011: 2): "For five years one group stands outside in the cold, looking in on the feast at the trough. Come the next five years it's their turn inside and they feast gluttonously, saying all the while 'it's my turn now', and actively avenging themselves on those who once fed while starving them." Although near-monopoly control of political institutions was a necessary supportive condition for the emergence of political clientelism, the increase in the intensity of competitive two-party politics surfaces as the primary contributing factor in its expansion in the 1990s and thereafter. This view was shared by most of those interviewed for this study. When asked to reflect on the reasons for the post-1990 expansion of political clientelism, politicians pointed mostly to two factors: increasing social need, and the rise of party competition. In relation to party competition, common contentions from politicians included: "It grew because politicians had to pander more to people to win a seat after the UDP began to win elections",<sup>323</sup> and "I didn't like giving out money, but you have

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<sup>323</sup> Interview with Young.

to play the game of the day to get elected”,<sup>324</sup> and “Competition among politicians to win by using handouts causes a feeding frenzy before elections...and you do it for one reason: to win.”<sup>325</sup> Former prime minister Said Musa summarised well, “In increasingly competitive party politics, winning the next election becomes the biggest thing. This leads to promising too much and increasing expectations. Then it snowballs to where we are today.”<sup>326</sup> Such responses support the interpretation that both major parties set up increasingly elaborate, permanent and well-funded clientelist exchange networks in the 1990s with clear expectations that these would give them competitive advantages over opponents.

As illustrated in Table 7, the high intensity of two-party competition for the selection of representatives in Belize’s FPTP electoral system is readily evident.

**TABLE 7**  
**Post-Independence General Election Results in Belize, 1984-2012**  
**by Winning Party, Vote Share (%), Seat Share and Voter Turnout (%)**

| ELECTION YEAR | WINNING PARTY | VOTE SHARE (%) | SEAT SHARE | TURNOUT (%) |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|------------|-------------|
| 1984          | UDP           | 53.4           | 21-7       | 74.9        |
| 1989          | PUP           | 51.2           | 15-13      | 72.6        |
| 1993          | UDP           | 48.4           | 16-13      | 72.1        |
| 1998          | PUP           | 59.3           | 26-3       | 90.1        |
| 2003          | PUP           | 52.9           | 22-7       | 79.3        |
| 2008          | UDP           | 56.8           | 25-6       | 75.3        |
| 2012          | UDP           | 49.9           | 17-14      | 74.0        |

Sources: M. Palacio (1993: 10-12), 2011: 155-176) and from the Elections and Boundaries Commission of Belize (<http://www.elections.gov.bz/>).

After the formative phase of two-party politics, competitive intensity increased appreciably after the first changeover of government in 1984, and then especially rapidly after the 1989 election. At the general election level, this trend is manifested in close results and the alternation of parties in power. Across the seven elections held between 1984 and 2012, the popular vote share was very close, with PUP averaging winning majorities of 54.4 per cent and the UDP of

<sup>324</sup> Interview with Balderamos-Garcia.

<sup>325</sup> Interview with R. Fonseca.

<sup>326</sup> Interview with Musa.

52.1 per cent. As the table shows, the near parity in popular vote share was not always reflected in the number of seats won, but in three elections (1989, 1993 and 2012) the seat margins themselves were thin.

Further evidence of high levels of competitive intensity can be found at the level of constituencies. Election statistics compiled by Young and Lazarus (2010: 19) show that in 118 constituency elections for seats in the House of Representatives in the four general elections from 1993 to 2008, 35 per cent were decided by less than 10 per cent of all votes. In some of these constituency elections, seats were decided by less than 20 votes. Examples include the one-vote margin in the Collet constituency in 1993, the 10 vote margin in the Cayo West constituency in 1998 and the 18 vote difference in both the Freetown and Corozal South East constituencies in 2008.<sup>327</sup> At the same time, intra-party competition at the constituency level has also been increasing. In the set of UDP and PUP intra-party conventions between 2010 and 2011, 35 of the 62 contests were contested, including the seats of several sitting ministers.<sup>328</sup> This increase in the number of potential party candidates and the higher levels of competition have contributed to the use of clientelist exchanges as a campaign tactic at both the intra-party and constituency levels as partisans seek electoral advantage.

Moreover, largely as a result of the penetration of two-party politics to all levels of local government, party competition and political clientelism have expanded in all nine municipal cities and towns and in almost every one of the near to 200 village councils. The competitive intensity at the municipal level is reflected in the general parity between the two main parties in terms of victories in elections for municipal councils. Of the nine municipal elections since 1991, the UDP has won five and the PUP has won four.<sup>329</sup> Municipal councils have been experiencing an increase in both demands and expectations for handouts from citizens, and some councils feel obligated to assist needy people to the point of diverting funds from core matters of the councils (Vernon, 2008: 45). The central reason for this spread of clientelism to local government is the

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<sup>327</sup> Unless stated otherwise, election data for this sub-section are from the Elections and Boundaries Department's website.

<sup>328</sup> This figure was calculated by the author based on the interview with Leslie and on news reports.

<sup>329</sup> Figures calculated from data compiled by M. Palacio (1993, 2011).

increasing competition between the parties and politicians at local levels. The decentralisation of local government in the past decade, which gave municipal and village councils marginally more authority, inadvertently increased the interest of the PUP and UDP in competing at these levels.<sup>330</sup>

Alternative or third parties and independent candidates have still not featured significantly at any level of Belizean elections in the post-independence period, and they have failed even to dent the electoral dominance of the two major parties. In the 2008 general election, for example, the combined share of votes received by all third parties and independent candidates was 2.8 per cent (M. Palacio, 2011: 175). Although third-party candidates or independents have won seats at the municipal level, they have not succeeded in winning the majority of seats in any municipality. Therefore, even though third-party or independent candidates can theoretically make a difference in terms of which of the major parties wins at the constituency level, Belize's electoral politics has been indisputably consolidated into a two-party/PUP-UDP system. Although multi-party systems can be as intensely competitive as two-party systems, it is likely that having only two electorally credible parties in a small state magnifies the perception of competitive intensity.<sup>331</sup>

In this regard, it is important to note that the Westminster parliamentary system and its FPTP electoral model, especially as adapted in Belize, have contributed to high levels of two-party competition and by extension to the expansion of political clientelism. At its core, the 'Belizeanised' version of the model tends toward intense two-party competition. For instance, the constitution establishes the official and adversarial post of Leader of the Opposition, who represents the minority party, and makes absolutely no mention of other political parties (Constitution of Belize, sections 37 and 47-49). The Westminster model has helped to create a political culture that accepts and expects two-party competition as the norm. The manner in which this model has evolved in Belize,

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<sup>330</sup> Interview with Dr Carla Barnett, consultant, former Financial Secretary and former Deputy Secretary-General to CARICOM, 17 December 2010, Belize City

<sup>331</sup> See, for example, the discussion of this issue in Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007: 42-43) and in the broader comparative system studies of Lijphart (1992), Linz and Valenzuela (1994) and Mainwaring (1993).



presents third parties and independent politicians with formidable electoral barriers.

Kitschelt and Wilkinson's (2007: 29) contention that conditions of high competition push partisans to target potentially uncommitted voters with clientelist inducements, when these are in significant enough numbers to give one or another party an advantage, has much relevance in the Belize case. Apart from the views shared by politicians from both parties, there is some further evidence that a substantial proportion of voters has been uncommitted to either the PUP or UDP. For example, in an opinion survey of three Belize City constituencies from the early 1990s, one-third of respondents claimed no party preference (M. Palacio, 1993: 55). A pre-election 2008 national SPEAR poll (2008: 7) indicated that 27.1 per cent of the electorate was undecided, while a pre-election 2012 national poll (by local newspaper) found that 32.7 per cent of the electorate was undecided.<sup>332</sup> Although it is clear that several factors can induce voters to support one party or the other, political clientelism has more fertile ground to expand with such levels of uncommitted voters—especially when elections can be won by very few votes and when other party distinctions are so weakly defined.

### ***The Role of Weak Substantive Party Distinctions***

Both the post-1990s intensification of two-party competition and the concurrent expansion of clientelism have transpired in a political context in which the PUP and the UDP have had progressively fewer distinguishing bases on which to compete for the support of the electorate. With regard to ideology and national visions, the two major political parties became less distinguishable in the 1990s and thereafter. This can be deduced both from observing striking similarities in policy actions when the parties are in power,<sup>333</sup> but also from official statements from the parties themselves. For example, Prime Minister Barrow (Barrow, 2010: 2) clarified that the UDP “is the preacher of no particular ‘ism’. We do operate a system that seeks always to empower the private sector as a preferred instrument of stimulation and economic growth. But we are also statist

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<sup>332</sup> New Poll Shows Parties in Dead Heat. (2012, January 22). *The Independent*.

<sup>333</sup> See Shoman (2011) for a general discussion of such policy similarity, and Bulmer-Thomas and Bulmer-Thomas (2012) for a discussion focused on similarities in economic policy.

in a sense, in that we do not shirk from a large activist role for government, especially when it comes to protecting the poor". A review of the PUP's party manifestos and recent speeches by PUP leaders indicate that the PUP has used near identical language to describe its philosophy of governing. For instance, in its 2008 party manifesto, the PUP presented itself as a business-friendly party that also endeavours to spread the wealth of the nation more fairly to the poor through social justice programmes (People's United Party, 2008: 2-4). As Gibson and Palacio (2011: 21) have argued, "Both political parties espouse party visions that promote the continuation of the formal, electoral and liberal democratic institutions assumed in the parliamentary democratic system."

The growing similarities between the two parties are not limited to ideology. Gibson and Palacio (2011: 21) asserted that both the PUP and the UDP "boast a similar type of political-economic elite leadership that has the support of fairly equal portions of the electorate." Furthermore, in the 1990s and after, both parties have continued to maintain multi-class, multi-racial, multi-gender and multi-ethnic support across urban, rural and immigrant communities. In particular, the pre-independence pattern of political parties appealing for votes from all ethnic groupings and winning seats in the same constituencies (in different elections) has continued. For example, in the urban centre of Belize City (which is majority Creole), the PUP has won contests in 14 of the constituencies in the three general elections between 1993 and 2008, while the UDP has won 16.<sup>334</sup> Since the 1990s, when new Central American immigrants began to become voters, both parties have competed intensely for their votes, and neither party can claim to have their majority support. Politicians interviewed were unanimous in agreement that there is parity in party support across these various groupings. This general parity can also be deduced by observing voting patterns over time at the district level in terms of which party gets candidates elected from particular constituencies that are known to have higher concentrations of particular groups. In terms of Central American

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<sup>334</sup> Figures calculated from data compiled by M. Palacio (1993, 2011). The same pattern (of both the PUP and the UDP winning seats across elections) applies in the Mestizo dominant constituencies in the Orange Walk and Corozal districts, the Garifuna dominant constituencies in the Stann Creek district, and the Maya dominant constituencies in the Toledo district.

immigrants, for example, in the constituencies of the Cayo district, where the majority of immigrants settled originally, neither party has established any long-lasting dominance.

This dwindling of ideological differences and policy-based support between the PUP and UDP led Shoman (2011: 319) to conclude that they now compete largely on “the question of which can best manage the mutually acceptable capitalist and neoliberal model.” However, the evidence presented in this thesis shows that the parties compete even more on the basis of which party can better attract and allocate more targeted resources to more people based on clientelist motivations. In the late 1990s and with the 1998 election as the likely symbolic turning-point, the capacity to deliver targeted resources to individuals displaced ideology and national visions as the primary distinguishing feature between Belize’s two main parties.

### ***The Role of a Politicised Election Management Body***

Overall, the Elections and Boundaries Commission, with the support of the Elections and Boundaries Department, is mandated to organise the registration of voters, propose occasional changes in electoral boundaries and conduct national and local elections with impartiality.<sup>335</sup> The PRC (2000: 114-119) had raised concerns about the diminished neutrality of Belize’s election management body and the gradual weakening of its capacity to monitor and regulate allegations of electoral mischief such as gerrymandering and vote buying. As noted, the pre-independence election management body, which functioned until 1988, was relatively independent, consisting of one autonomous body with no party-based appointments and with the power to hire its own chief elections officer and staff (M. Palacio, 2010: 8). However, the 1988 constitutional amendments effectively gave the majority party dominant control over the EBC, moved the power of staff appointment from the EBC to the already politicised public service and downgraded the EBC secretariat as a regular department within a government ministry. The PUP, which had publicly criticised the UDP amendments when in opposition, further amended the election law in 2001 such that the Chief Elections Officer is no longer appointed

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<sup>335</sup> The procedures for these matters are legally prescribed in Section 88 of the Belize Constitution and in the Representation of the People Act (2000).

by the Governor-General on the advice of the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, but rather directly by an often politicised Public Services Commission.

In an interview with the author, senior staff highlighted several of the resulting institutional weaknesses of the ECB and the EBD. They pointed to having to deal with 'political' bosses in both the ECB and the department, the high turnover of staff after elections, under-resourcing and under-staffing of the department and the ECB squashing staff proposals for improvements.<sup>336</sup> In relation to voter bribery, although the department is aware of allegations, it keeps no records. One elections officer stated: "If we hear of or see possible bribery, we have the right to investigate it or stop it. But we don't have the capacity to investigate and monitor such things. And there is also the issue of the difficulty of proving bribery. It would likely end up in court...and that is more time, resources and staff we don't have."<sup>337</sup> They also acknowledged being aware of the practice of politicians paying voters to transfer or not transfer between constituencies, and that transferees ask for receipts so that they can show such proof to the politician. Again, they lamented that the department's resources do not allow for comprehensive and effective checking of the veracity of requests for transfers of residence and noted that "politicians have little incentive to change" this situation.<sup>338</sup>

These developments in Belize's election management body conform to Stokes' (2007: 619) findings that the particular procedures and de facto practices of electoral institutions in any system can "encourage the personal vote...and also clientelism." The relative lack of effectiveness and independence of electoral institutions in Belize have likely facilitated the expansion of political clientelism. When in government, the PUP and UDP have the legal and institutional means to influence election administration, including changing chief election officers and other staff and how they respond to reports of violations of the voter bribery sections of the election law. The revised section of this law prohibits the trading of money or favours for votes, apart from gifts valued under \$20, and there are

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<sup>336</sup> (Joint) interview with Dorothy Bradley, Chief Elections Officer and Francisco Zuniga, Assistant Chief Elections Officer, 7 April 2011, Belize City.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

possible penalties (for bribe giver and taker) of up to one year in prison, fines of up to \$500 if convicted and debarment from participating in elections (Government of Belize, 2000: sections 32-36). However, as noted, in spite of the spate of public allegations, there have been no legal convictions in this regard in Belize's modern political history.

### ***A Role for Political Culture?***

The complex 'chicken-egg' issue of political culture has not featured prominently as a causal variable in the literature on political clientelism. As Henke (2003: 114-115) stated, "the study of political culture attempts to uncover (the socio-genesis) of values, attitudes and judgements (sometimes prejudices) which inform the political process in a particular country, region or population."<sup>339</sup> Several persons interviewed for the Belize study made pointed references to culture-related causes. This prompts one to ask if there is something about Belizean political culture that has facilitated clientelist behaviour. Francis Fonseca has been among those to suggest a link to cultural values:

There has been a marked erosion of values. Since the 1990s there is a new generation of voters. They are more informed of the handout game and for them, politicians are just an opportunity. But people reflect their parties, too. The PUP was a party of national vision and of social justice values. But that stopped in early 1980s, and no party has had it since."<sup>340</sup>

Another political actor lamented that, "People have become shameless [in wanting handouts] due to the breakdown of our society. The value system is going and personal greed is on the rise. It's in the culture."<sup>341</sup>

Although much has been written about Belizean culture generally, little of this literature has dealt directly with political culture. On the positive side, the common narrative is that a combination of British pre-independence socialisation of the political-economic elite, the Guatemala claim, the experience of 14 peaceful elections (1954-2012) and the ability to exercise basic political rights, has led to a political society that values territorial integrity, free elections, peaceful changes of government, respect for fundamental rights and a strong suspicion of military and autocratic rule (Vernon, 2011: 4). A regional

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<sup>339</sup> For a comprehensive edited collection of both theoretical and case-based studies on political culture in the Caribbean context, see Henke and Reno (2003).

<sup>340</sup> Interview with F. Fonseca.

<sup>341</sup> Interview with Williams.

AmericasBarometer survey of 23 countries on attitudes to democracy by Seligson and Zephyr (2008-4) found that 'support for democracy' in Belize was 71.9 per cent (ranking 11<sup>th</sup>), 'support for the right of public contestation' was 76 per cent (7<sup>th</sup>), 'support for political tolerance' was 65.6 per cent (3<sup>rd</sup>) and 'support for political legitimacy of core institutions' was 55.9 per cent (1<sup>st</sup>). In short, these results suggest that Belizeans generally view Westminster parliamentary democracy as a key component of national political identity.

However, a few observers have pointed to disturbing aspects of Belize's political culture. Katalyst (2007: 155) described Belizean political culture as featuring "high levels of cynicism and disillusionment about the political system and political leadership, low levels of interest and practice in planning and monitoring, short-term and front-end bias in policy-making and a tendency to look for panacea solutions." In their 2011 study, Gibson and Palacio (2011: 21) argued that Belize's history of origin (being settled by pirates, a history of illicit trading activity and a lack of political commitment to the colony from Britain) have contributed to a "nebulous societal moral/legal divide...characterized by a general attitude of nonchalance towards high risk, but obviously lucrative illicit activity. It is one that has long historical roots, which perhaps also explains the éminence grise existence of seemingly influential 'underground' economic elite." Such observations suggest that the positive and the disagreeable constructions of Belizean political culture have at least one characteristic in common: they are perceived to permeate the political elite and general populace alike.

It is, however, debatable the extent to which the worrying features are 'cultural', permeate political and economic relationships and are historical or more recent in origin. Two observations related to the expansion of political clientelism can be made in this regard. The first is that cultural features (such as 'the tendency to panacea solutions' and a 'gray moral/legal divide') may help explain the apparent ease with which so many politicians and citizens have embraced clientelist practices. The second (which is addressed in the next chapter) is whether its rise is related to existing political culture or not, political clientelism is itself becoming an element of wider Belizean political culture.

## The Relevance of Social and Economic Developments

### *The Role of Persistent Poverty*

As illustrated in the review of the scholarship on clientelism, there is nearly unanimous agreement that poverty and inequality are basic supportive conditions for the emergence and expansion of political clientelism in emerging democracies. It is an established fact that high rates of poverty and income disparities have persisted in Belize since independence and there is conclusive evidence that the incidences of both have increased since 1995. The first comprehensive study measured overall poverty at 33 per cent in 1995 (Government of Belize, 1996). Standardised country poverty assessment (CPA) reports in 2002 and 2009 reveal a significant increase in individual (population) poverty from 34 per cent in 2002 to 41.3 per cent in 2009, and an alarming increase in indigent poverty from 11 per cent to 15.8 per cent (Government of Belize, 2010: 53-54).<sup>342</sup> The 2009 rate ranks Belize as the third poorest country in the greater Caribbean, with only Haiti and the Dominican Republic showing higher rates (Bulmer-Thomas and Bulmer-Thomas, 2012: 147).

In terms of income inequality, as measured by the Gini coefficient, poverty assessments show a moderate deterioration from 0.40 in 2002 to 0.42 in 2009—neither among the highest nor lowest in the Caribbean or Central America (Government of Belize: 2010a: 59).<sup>343</sup> However, the disparities in income by 2009 were indicated by a significant expenditure gap: the top quintile accounted for 48.8 per cent of total expenditures, whereas the bottom quintile accounted for only 5.8 per cent (Government of Belize, 2010a: 50). As in the 2002 poverty survey, the 2009 study showed that poverty rates are highest among the Maya of the Toledo District and in pockets of the Creole urban centre of Belize City, but it also pointed to significant poverty increases in agriculturally-based rural areas and in the Corozal district. Overall, rural poverty was measured at 55.3 per cent and urban poverty at 27.9 per cent (Government of Belize, 2010a: 64).

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<sup>342</sup> The 2002 and 2009 CPAs measure poverty based on the ability to purchase a basic basket of food and non-food items. Indigence is measured only by the minimum costs of food requirements and poverty adds the costs of basic non-food items to that.

<sup>343</sup> For example, the Gini coefficient for 2010 in neighbouring Guatemala was 0.48 and 0.39 for Trinidad and Tobago (Government of Belize, 2010a: 62).

The 2002 and 2009 CPAs confirmed much of what most other social sector reports have indicated about Belize's social context for some time. For example, Belize's First Report on the Millennium Development Goals (National Human Development Advisory Committee, 2005), while pointing to isolated achievements, indicated an overall trend of increasing social problems and social vulnerability. The global Human Development Index (HDI) reports show that Belize slipped from number 67 in 2003 to number 93 out of 182 countries in 2009.<sup>344</sup> Several other studies and reports have chronicled the deteriorating human security situation, health challenges and excruciatingly slow progress in improving the quality of education.<sup>345</sup> Importantly, the increase in persistent poverty and more skewed income distribution coincide with the post-1990 period during which the most rapid expansion of political clientelism occurred. Nevertheless, how relevant is poverty as a cause of this expansion?

The strongest indication that there is a causal relationship between poverty and inequality, on the one hand, and expanding clientelism, on the other, comes from the experiences of politicians and citizens themselves. The client profile constructed in the previous chapter reveals that even though the clientelist game is played in Belize by all income classes, the poor do indeed make up the vast majority of client numbers across regardless of geography, ethnicity, migratory status or gender. Not surprisingly, there was near unanimous agreement among interviewees that poverty has contributed significantly to the growth of political clientelism. As in the pre-1990s period, the majority of politicians couched their responses in philanthropic and paternalistic tones of 'helping' the needy. Indeed, a minority argue that the people and specifically poor people were most responsible for the post-1990s expansion because their demands on politicians for handouts had increased so exponentially. For instance, a former representative contended, "I don't agree that it is the politicians and the parties that caused this [expansion]. I see it the other way around. It is the people whose needs and demands we reacted to. We have to be there every week reacting to their needs."<sup>346</sup> However, most politicians

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<sup>344</sup> HDI figures are from <http://www.undp.org/hdr2009.shtml>.

<sup>345</sup> See, for example, Caribbean Development Bank (2004).

<sup>346</sup> Interview with Marin.



conditioned this demand-driven analysis of helping the needy with the concession that politicians, as they did in the 1950s, have also continued to initiate clientelist relationships. As such, the majority of respondents offered more nuanced views on the relative role of poverty. A few examples suffice:

Poverty is key. It is not and should not be an excuse but it is certainly an underlying factor. There is greater need now than before independence, more poverty. The national institutions are not providing the answers in a sustainable way.<sup>347</sup>

There has been a growing social need. Some people even can't afford food, much less paying rent. Deficiencies in the state's social and welfare systems have been filled in part by the politicians, clinics and benefits politics.<sup>348</sup>

It [the expansion] was not fully the fault of politicians. It was a symbiotic relationship between politician and voter. Yes, politicians started this handout thing but people played along and their interests merged. The fact that people were indeed poorer just made it easier.<sup>349</sup>

Social vulnerability increased at the same time as partisan competition was increasing...making it easier for politicians to buy support. People were poor before [independence], but they had more options [for making ends meet].<sup>350</sup>

Overall, the majority of constituents interviewed generally agreed that social need was a major reason for turning to politicians for assistance. A common type of comment was, "The neighbourhood [has] gone down. There are more poor people, more houses falling down, more crime and no help with things like day care. So some people go to [politicians]."<sup>351</sup> However, some interviewees also offered important distinctions. Those who were poorer spoke in terms of handouts from politicians being entitlements because it was their money anyway that was being given back to them. As noted, some citizens accused politicians of seeking power to enrich themselves through corruption and argued that it is only 'right' that they get a piece of the spoils. One contended, "We poorer ones get offers from the representatives and a lot of people take them. I don't blame them...they are poor and need help. And the politicians are thieves anyway."<sup>352</sup>

Some citizens suggested that they go to politicians for individual help because it is so difficult to get assistance directly from the government. This is reflected in

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<sup>347</sup> Interview with Mark Espat.

<sup>348</sup> Interview with Saldivar.

<sup>349</sup> Interview with Singh.

<sup>350</sup> Interview with Diane Haylock, former constituency candidate (UDP) and former civil society leader, 10 November 2010, Belize City.

<sup>351</sup> Interview with Constituent P14, 31 January 2011, Belize City.

<sup>352</sup> Interview with Constituent P2.

the frustrations of one citizen trying to get a residential lot: “I played the [handouts] game to get a piece of land. I went first to the ministry of lands but got nowhere at all. So I went straight to [my representative] and he got a lease for me quick. I would be stupid not to go to the politician when everyone is playing this game. And I would be stupid not to think he wanted my vote.”<sup>353</sup>

As illustrated earlier, it is not only the poor who play the clientelist game in Belize. A review of responses from middle-class citizens and small business owners indicates that, although there is wide agreement that poverty helps to fuel the clientelist game for the poor, some of the basic motivations for their own increased participation are quite similar. The central justification running through these responses is that the playing field for accessing state-managed resources and services and for doing business is not level, and one has to play by the existing rules to get ahead. For example, one small-business owner attested to being tempted to purchase contraband goods for his business because so many others were doing it and under-cutting his prices. However, minimising legal repercussions required providing some sort of ‘support’ to a certain politician.<sup>354</sup> Another interviewee informed of the widely used scheme of over bidding for government supply contracts and then, once paid, transferring the difference to particular politicians who had approved the bids.<sup>355</sup> One middle-class constituent, who admitted to not needing financial assistance, told of receiving a birthday card with a \$100 ‘gift’ from the constituency’s representative, but keeping it because it was free.<sup>356</sup>

Because the poverty data in the 2002 and 2009 CPAs are disaggregated by rural/urban location, district, ethnicity, migration and gender, it is useful to explore a few further possible links between poverty and clientelism. However, such discussions need to consider that how poverty is measured presents challenges for intra-country comparisons—and, by extension, for cross-national comparisons as well. In the case of Belize, the minimum food basket (MFB)

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<sup>353</sup> Interview with Constituent P21, 4 February 2011, Belize City.

<sup>354</sup> Source kept confidential by request.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

<sup>356</sup> Interview with Constituent P8, 27 January 2011, Belize City.

portion of the poverty line<sup>357</sup> is calculated by estimating the MFB first by district and then computing a national (average) cost for the MFB. Therefore, the discussion proceeds with the caveat that comparison among districts is not as straightforward as it may appear.

As indicated, political clientelist behaviour emerged first in urban areas, and especially in the Creole centre of Belize City. By the elections of 2003 and 2008, it had spread extensively to all other districts, and by extension to all ethnic groups. Generally, most politicians perceived that clientelism is marginally higher in urban areas. In particular, many pinpointed Belize City as having more intense and more overt clientelist practices, and the Afro-Creole population as being more partial to clientelism. However, although poverty increased between 2002 and 2009 across all geographic areas, the 2009 CPA found that poverty was almost twice as high in rural than urban areas, and that as much as 80 per cent of the indigent poor reside in rural parts of Belize (Government of Belize, 2010a: 64-65). This would suggest higher incidences of clientelism—in contrast to the perceptions of politicians.

The situation in the Belize district sheds some light on this apparent contradiction. Although the Belize district had the least amount of poverty of all six districts in both the 2002 and 2009 CPAs, and the urban part of the Belize district (that is Belize City) was only marginally less poor than rural Belize district, there were interesting variations. The south side of Belize City, along with the Toledo district, were found to have high “concentrations of poverty and other social and development issues” (Government of Belize, 2010: 213). Additionally, Belize City is the most densely populated part of the country (with 17.1 per cent of the total population) and 10 of the 31 constituencies are located there—seven on the south side. This combination of concentrations of poverty and electoral constituencies in a small urban space, and the fact that Belize City is the national commercial, financial and media centre, contribute to making it the node of political clientelism in the country. Also consequential is the historical fact that Belize City was the launch-point for the emergence of modern

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<sup>357</sup> This line, below which individuals are considered poor, includes two components: a “minimum cost of a food basket needed to provide a healthy diet for an adult male” and a non-food expenditure amount (Government of Belize, 2010: 47).

political clientelism—due largely to being the fermenting ground for the nationalist movement and party politics. To a large extent, despite Belmopan being the administrative capital, Belize City (where both major parties are headquartered) remains the ‘political’ capital of the country.

Additional insights come from exploring the links between poverty and ethnicity. The 2009 CPA found that Creole households had the lowest poverty rate of 32 per cent, that the Maya had the highest at 68 per cent, and that there had been significant increases since 2002 for the Mestizo and Garifuna. However, apart from the perceptions of interviewees that a larger proportion of Creoles were clients, there is no clear evidence that differences in incidence of poverty by ethnicity significantly affect the relative prevalence of political clientelism among different ethnic groups. Clientelist behaviour is observable at high extents across segments of all ethnic groups and political parties target them all for votes. Furthermore, the discussion of Belize City suggests that the views of some politicians—to the effect that Creoles are more prone to becoming clients than other ethnic groups—is highly dubious. As it did historically, Belize City has a higher concentration of Creoles than any other part of the country, and the higher prevalence of political clientelism in the city, for the various reasons given above, has probable led to this false perception. This is perhaps most clearly illustrated in the Belmopan constituency, which has a population of near-equal proportions of Creoles and Mestizos/Maya. Constituents from both ethnic groups participate in the handout game and, if anything, the Maya/Mestizos (who have lower incomes in Belmopan overall) make up larger client numbers.<sup>358</sup>

The 2002 and 2009 CPAs also assist in assessing the finding that women make up a significantly larger proportion of the client population at the constituency level than men do. The 2009 study found a virtual balance between male and female poverty rates (at 42 per cent and 40 per cent, respectively), and that “female-headed households (including single-person households) are slightly less likely to be poor than male-headed ones—29 per cent compared with 32 per cent” (Government of Belize, 2010a: 71). These figures suggest that there

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<sup>358</sup> Interview with Saldivar.

are other gender-related factors at play in the observed female/male client breakdown. When asked to reflect on the reasons for the gender disparity in clients, responses from several female politicians indicated that women have more responsibilities to provide for the home, that there are large numbers of single-mothers as heads of households in some areas, and that women have more time to come to political clinics because men are more apt to have day jobs.

The 2010 population census did indeed confirm that there are more female-headed households: 22.6 per cent of children under the age of 18 years were living with their mothers only, compared to 2.5 per cent living with their fathers only and 65.8 per cent living with both parents (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2011: 55). In terms of unemployment, 2010 figures show that, at 33.1 per cent, female unemployment was more than twice that of males at 15 per cent (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2011: 16). Additionally, the fact that women's requests of politicians were revealed to be more related to basic needs than those of men points to the presence of a clear socio-economic relationship based on the uneven gender burden of dealing with the effects of poverty. One observer may have it just right: "Women have always been the political foot soldiers. They may go more to politicians, but get less from the informal handout system...just as they get less in the formal economy."<sup>359</sup>

### ***Linkages to Neoliberal Economic Policies***

As noted, by 1990 both the PUP and UDP were evolving toward decidedly more capitalist macro-economic approaches. As in almost every other nation in the region, Belize was pressured by financial institutions and major bi-lateral economic partners to adopt 'Washington Consensus' neoliberal economic policies in the late 1980s and the 1990s. By the elections of the 1990s, both parties were competing to out-do each other in enacting and implementing market-oriented reforms, such as foreign investment promotion, trade liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation. Distinctive perspectives on the role this macro-economic policy shift played in the expansion of clientelism are

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<sup>359</sup> Interview with Barnett. Several studies, including those by Catzim and Rosberg (2001) and by Lewis (2012), have confirmed the common knowledge that women make up the vast majority of campaign workers in both parties. Barrow-Giles (2011) found similar gender roles in her study of women and politics in the Caribbean.

provided by two Belizean political actors with diametrically opposed ideological orientations: Assad Shoman, perhaps Belize's most prominent socialist, and Ralph Fonseca, widely seen as its most ardent capitalist. Shoman, who was a representative and minister, had co-led the last failed attempt in the mid-1980s to move the PUP to the ideological left. Fonseca, who also served as a representative and minister, was the PUP's campaign and finance manager from 1987 to 2008 and a principal architect of the PUP's sharp turn to the right and its embrace of neoliberal economics in the 1990s and thereafter. Both key informants pinpointed the spread of neoliberal capitalist policies and programmes in Belize as a central cause of the expansion of political clientelism, but they gave very different interpretations of the specific linkages.

Fonseca argued that neoliberal economic policies have been positive for Belize and its people and have provided the fuel for the economic growth witnessed over the past two decades.<sup>360</sup> He contended that as the two parties competed more intensely for votes in this free-market context in the 1990s, both politicians and voters began naturally to see votes increasingly as commodities to be bartered:

Voters had more purchasing price for their votes...just like everything else in the market place. They understood politicians were dependent on their vote...because there was no longer this natural affiliation to any party. It's just like market forces—only in this case increased demand for votes. And the politicians and party strategists have to service it [the demand].<sup>361</sup>

By 'service', Fonseca meant delivering targeted benefits to people for votes, and he believes that a political party simply has to have the right machinery to "manage" demand [expectations] and supply. In short, Fonseca, who preferred the term 'benefits politics' to handout politics, viewed the expansion of political clientelism as a natural, expected and potentially positive element of capitalist growth.

On the other hand, Shoman contended that the implementation of neoliberal policies, such as unbridled foreign investment and privatisations, contributed to a loss of state power, skewed distribution of economic wealth, increased

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<sup>360</sup> Interview with R. Fonseca.

<sup>361</sup> Ibid.

poverty and dependency and a culture of consumerism.<sup>362</sup> This neoliberal atmosphere, he argued, also contributed to larger sums of money entering party politics as business interests sought to 'buy' influence. He added that in a context of competitive party politics, in which parties have no substantive distinctions and in which more is being given as handouts, more politicians accepted clientelism as an electoral strategy and more people began to demand handouts to make ends meet. He argued that people play the 'game' as a logical reaction in a context in which social spending is limited and social institutions are failing.

Although differing strongly on the merits of the neoliberal economic policies adopted in the 1990s, both Shoman and Fonseca agreed that these have played multiple roles in the expansion of political clientelism. However, on the particular impact on poverty, Shoman's analysis of the relationship between neoliberal economic policies and clientelism has more currency based on the available evidence. Whereas the poverty that contributed to the pre-independence emergence of political clientelism had its roots in the mid-twentieth century economic collapse and in the inequities of the colonial system, the kind of poverty that fed the post-independence expansion had some 'new' features related, in part, to neoliberal policies. The growing relevance of such policies in the 1990s and thereafter reflected not only the persistence of poverty, but also a widening income gap and an increase in consumerism. In addition to these changes in poverty, other factors related to the neoliberal economic policies facilitated the spread of clientelism.

The economic record shows that after a first decade of independence marked by a slow recovery from the macroeconomic downturn, Belize's small and open economy continued to be characterised by high volatility in GDP growth, overall fragility and skewed distribution of economic resources over the 1990-2010 period.<sup>363</sup> Although GDP grew by an average of 4.9 per cent per year over the

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<sup>362</sup> Interview with Shoman. See also Shoman (2011: 329) for more of his views on Belize's experience with neoliberal policies. By 'culture of consumerism', Shoman was making reference to an increase in individual demand for (mostly imported) consumer goods and to more individualism in approaching societal challenges.

<sup>363</sup> Gomez (2007: 7-10) illustrated that the GDP slumps and booms can be matched with alternating periods of contractionary and expansionary fiscal policies, which themselves tended to coincide with election cycles. See also, Metzgen (2012) for a summary assessment of Belize's economy since 1981.

1980 to 2010 period, it dipped to below one per cent in several years (Bulmer-Thomas and Bulmer-Thomas, 2012: 139). As measured by GDP per head at constant prices, in 2010 Belize remained at its 1980 rank of 22 out of 28 countries in the wider Caribbean (Bulmer-Thomas and Bulmer-Thomas, 2012: 139). The Belize economy has also changed significantly in terms of the sectoral share of GDP. Between 1980 and 2008, primary activities (related to sugar, citrus, banana, marine and forestry products) decreased from 27.4 per cent of total GDP to 12.2 per cent, whereas the share related to services (especially tourism) increased from 41.7 per cent to 65.1 per cent (Bulmer-Thomas and Bulmer-Thomas, 2012: 138). Central to Belize's neoliberal economic policies and to its GDP growth was the mantra to promote foreign investment, and the majority of new investments, especially in services, were foreign in origin. Bulmer-Thomas and Bulmer-Thomas (2012: 156-166) convincingly showed how the generous concessions related to these investments resulted in less revenue for government coffers, which in turn increased the need to borrow internationally to help meet national development needs. Thus, the evidence is strong that the uneven growth in GDP since 1990 has had limited positive effect on social development—and, indeed, a few negative results.

Overall, the Belize economy has performed poorly in terms of employment. A Belize Central Bank study (Metzgen, 2012: 30-31) of economic performance since independence stated that “high unemployment has been enduring, registering in double digits in 15 of the 20 years between 1990 and 2009.” For example, unemployment was 15 per cent in 1990, 14 per cent in 1998, 11.6 per cent in 2004 and 13.1 per cent in 2009 (Statistical Institute of Belize, 2007, 2012).<sup>364</sup> As demonstrated by various poverty assessments, the human impact of the economic growth generated was also skewed in terms of distribution. Additionally, the revenue leakages related to profit repatriation by foreign investors have contributed to fiscal deficits in almost every fiscal year since the 1990s (Bulmer-Thomas and Bulmer-Thomas, 2012: 163-164). These deficits are a central cause of the huge increases in public debt, and especially external

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<sup>364</sup> These figures are from annual labour force surveys. The decennial censuses, which measure unemployment at a different point in the year, estimated unemployment at 18 per cent in 1990, 20.3 in 2000 and 23.1 per cent in 2010.



debt as a percentage of GDP, since the 1990s. This debt/GDP ratio peaked in 2004 at over 100 per cent of GDP (\$2.2 billion), and economic disaster was only averted by a crippling external debt re-structuring package negotiated with private debtors (referred to as the 'super bond'). This \$1.1 billion bond requires that Belize pays increasingly huge amounts of its annual revenue to service this debt until 2029 (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2007: 12).<sup>365</sup>

Another core plank of the neoliberal swing in Belize was the divestment of most major state-owned assets and services. Starting in the late 1980s, there was a spate of privatisations, including all of the 'big three' utility companies responsible for telecommunications, electricity and water.<sup>366</sup> By 2002, all of these utilities were not only out of government hands, but also out of Belizean hands, as parties in power sold off more and more shares to foreign investors. Although partly driven by external forces, including the policy prescriptions of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank, Gomez (2007: 13) argued that the privatisations were also undertaken by Belize's governments as a "panacea to the budget deficit situation" in the short term, but ended up leaving governments with little control and a long-term loss of public revenue. Proceeds from divestments were often used to service commercial loans that were due or to improve a weak fiscal situation before an election. In short, misguided and/or poorly implemented neoliberal policies not only contributed to skewed wealth distribution, but they also decreased public revenue, which could have been used for social spending to alleviate poverty.

The linkages between neoliberal policies and the expansion of clientelism can be further illustrated by exploring particular business relationships. The example of Lord Ashcroft (who became a major figure in the Conservative Party in the United Kingdom) is particularly telling. Although Ashcroft has not been the only major foreign investor, his investments have been among the largest and their relevance to Belizean party politics is difficult to overstate. As noted earlier,

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<sup>365</sup> In March 2013, and following a lengthy negotiation process, the Government of Belize announced that it had been successful in restructuring the super bond (Central Bank of Belize, 2013). In effect, the restructured deal extends the repayment period (for \$1.058 billion in external debt) to 2038 and results in a saving of \$494,000,000 in debt-servicing payments over the 2013-2022 period (Longworth, 2013: 1).

<sup>366</sup> There has been little comprehensive analysis of these privatisations. One exception is Mustafa and Reeder's (2009) study of the privatisation of the water utility.

Ashcroft made one of his first investments in Belize with the purchase of the Belize branch of Royal Bank of Canada in 1987 under a UDP government, and was awarded a 30-year tax holiday for all his business interests by the 1989-1993 PUP government. As a harbinger of things to come, the International Business Companies Act (IBC) of 1990, which granted these specific investment concessions, was actually drafted by Ashcroft's own lawyers (Bulmer-Thomas and Bulmer-Thomas, 2012: 156). The UDP government that won the 1993 election, with encouragement from a Conservative government in the United Kingdom, continued the various tax concessions enjoyed by Ashcroft's investments. Over the two decades after the IBC Act, these investments would spread to numerous companies, including an off-shore banking business,<sup>367</sup> majority ownership in the privatised telephone company, one of the largest hotels, one (of two) national television stations, the shipping registry and the off-shore business registry.<sup>368</sup>

It is not a coincidence that Ashcroft's role as the single largest financial contributor to Belize's political parties began around the same time as the 'negotiations' to enact the IBC Act. As was confirmed in interviews with key leaders of both political parties, Ashcroft has featured "prominently and sometimes controversially in Belizean politics as a financial contributor to both the PUP and UDP" (Smith, 2011: 289). Donations by Ashcroft and other big donors have been a significant part of the 'big money' that began flowing to the parties in the 1990s as both evolved into commercial entities that competed to out-do the other on the neoliberal policy front. The key implication here is that the amount of private money in party politics increased dramatically in the 1990s and thereafter as a function of increased demand as both parties modernised and also of increased supply as sources of campaign donations from wealthy business interests expanded. It will likely never be known what proportion of such private funds finds its way into the realm of handout politics, but, as most interviewees attest, this is certainly a major source of resources for the clientelist operations of both major parties. Indeed, the level of private

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<sup>367</sup> Duffy (2000: 553) has recorded that Ashcroft's BHI played a key role in drafting Belize's Off-Shore Banking Act and Money Laundering Prevention Act in the mid-1990s.

<sup>368</sup> Lord Ashcroft of Belize facing eviction as country turns on him. (2009, November 1). *The Observer*. London.

funding suggests that some politicians have themselves become clients of wealthy 'donor patrones' such as Ashcroft.

On the surface, the policy of divestment of government-controlled entities in the 1990s and 2000s appears to represent a significant exception in the narrative of politicians' increasing control of resource allocation institutions as a supportive condition for growing political clientelism. However, even as privatisations took away some ability to dispense patronage, in one regard, they increased the opportunities for clientelism, in another. This point of view is argued cogently by Jones:

In part, the big jump of handout politics in the 1990s was facilitated by the privatisations. This was in effect a transfer of government resources to the private sector and a way for more money to end up outside government and in the unregulated private coffers of parties and politicians. This actually increased the peddling of influence through the promises of favours for campaign contributions by large investors. The money trail is harder to trace than if government still controlled these entities.<sup>369</sup>

Not surprisingly, Jones singles out the example of Ashcroft's purchase of the majority of shares in the telecommunications monopoly, Ashcroft's campaign donations to political parties and the generous concessions he was awarded. The pertinent argument here is that government control over public utilities, which was lost as a result of the privatisations, was counter-balanced by new opportunities for clientelism gained by political parties through other flows, namely unregulated financial transfers from large donors, who benefit from the divestments. In this regard, political parties and politicians have access to at least two sets of funds. One is the immediate revenue from divestments, which has been used to influence elections via 'piñata' goodies. The other is the direct financial contributions to parties from business interests, some of which have been used for discretionary handouts to clients.

Interestingly, since 2008 there has been a reversal of some of the major privatisations. For differing reasons, but with widespread public support,<sup>370</sup> all

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<sup>369</sup> Interview with Dennis Jones, Director, Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology, 3 March 2011, Belmopan.

<sup>370</sup> All informal polls conducted by media houses show high levels of public approval for the nationalisations.

three major public utilities have been, in effect, re-nationalised<sup>371</sup> and a constitutional amendment enacted to ensure permanent majority state control. The overall effects of these nationalisations on political clientelism are still to be seen. One scenario is that political parties, which have become more seasoned in the art of creative clientelism, may have added opportunities to use their increased control for targeted clientelist purposes in a context of greater client demand.<sup>372</sup> One early indication of the attraction of this option is that just months before national and municipal elections in early 2012, the UDP government (through the utilities commission) made quick decisions to lower both electricity and water rates.<sup>373</sup> In step with the trend of diminishing party distinctions, the PUP, which had originally criticised the nationalisations as dictatorial and bad for the foreign investment climate, committed in its 2012 manifesto to “maintain majority control of all public utilities” for the state (People's United Party, 2012: 11).

### ***The Role of Inadequate Alternatives***

The assumption underlying much of the discussion thus far is that formal public institutions of allocation have generally not succeeded in delivering goods and services adequately and fairly so as to meet the needs and demands of many citizens. In relation to clientelism, the relevant argument was captured well by a former politician:

Our national institutions that are supposed to provide for our people and develop the nation are failing. They have not changed much since the 1960s. More and more people go to the political frontlines. They go straight to the offices, clinics and homes of their representatives. Politicians have become the main social providers for too many.<sup>374</sup>

Prime Minister Barrow shared a similar analysis:

[Handout politics] reflect a huge failing of the system. People don't go to the Immigration Department or the Lands Department (and pretty much departments across the public service) on their own because they get absolutely frustrated. Either they are not treated

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<sup>371</sup> The water utility was repossessed by a PUP government in 2007 after the private owners gave up the company for reasons related to low profits. The telecommunications company, then owned by Ashcroft, was nationalised by a UDP government in a hostile takeover in 2009 over the issue of a generous tax concession agreement negotiated by the past PUP government. The electricity company was nationalised in 2011 by a UDP government after repeated government bailouts of the company.

<sup>372</sup> Although Belize has a semi-autonomous Public Utilities Commission (PUC) with a mandate to regulate utilities and set fair rates, government appoints the majority of commissioners.

<sup>373</sup> Water Rates Going Down. (2012, January 24). *Channel 5 News*; and More on the Lowering of Electricity Rates. (2012, January 26). *Channel 5 News*.

<sup>374</sup> Interview with Jorge Espat.

well or they don't get what they need from government...so of course they'll go to their area representatives. Nature abhors a vacuum.<sup>375</sup>

There is indeed evidence to validate such views. Belize's key social welfare institutions are located in departments of government with responsibilities for social and human development, health care, education, land, housing and job creation. As in most developing-country contexts, government revenue is supplemented with both local and international grants and loans to help meet public needs. In the particular case of compulsory social insurance, the Social Security scheme, established in 1981, is the only national mechanism that covers contributing employees and retirees with very basic allowances. There is (as elaborated in the next chapter) also a small non-contributory pension scheme. Overall, the coverage of welfare safety-nets directly aimed at disadvantaged Belizeans, although increasing since the 1990s, can be described as limited and ad hoc. These include a public hospital system with basic but national coverage, educational assistance through the Ministry of Education and small monthly and emergency stipends for some of the very poor through the ministry of human development.

Outside of these, most other publicly funded assistance tend to be project-based, of limited duration and highly politicised. It is too early to assess whether such programmes as the pilot National Health Insurance (NHI) plan launched in 2005, with very limited coverage, and the various 'pro-poor'<sup>376</sup> programmes of the (2008 to present) UDP government, will survive and expand. These latter programmes include a pilot Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programme launched in 2010, a small food pantry programme for very poor households launched in 2011, and various youth employment schemes.<sup>377</sup> The Belize version of the CCT is called BOOST, and like CCTs elsewhere it targets poor households through women. After a shaky start (discussed in next chapter), it has received fairly positive initial reports. For example, a World Bank document noted that, "A little over a year in operation, it already reaches 3,177

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<sup>375</sup> Interview with Barrow.

<sup>376</sup> 'Pro-poor' is the label used by the UDP government to categorise various immediate relief initiatives.

<sup>377</sup> As an example of the short-term life span of some of these initiatives 200 young people were laid-off a youth employment project after the 2012 election as part of an overall scaling back due to lack of government/project funds. (200 Southside Rejuvenation Workers Fired. (2012, August 24). *Channel 5 News*).

households (12.5 per cent of all Belize poor households) and over 8,600 people, which represents about 6 per cent of the poor population” (World Bank, 2012).

In a context of increasing poverty and economic hardships, several recent social assessments indicate that not only are social benefits arrangements unable to satisfy needs adequately, but they are also not always effective in distributing what is available in a fair and transparent manner.<sup>378</sup> In its analysis of the social sector, the 2009 CPA (Government of Belize, 2010: 204) found that social spending as a percentage of GDP expenditure fell from 14.5 per cent between 1992 to 1994, to 10 per cent in 2001, and to 7.5 per cent in 2006, with only negligible increases since then. It also showed that 70 per cent of social spending continues to be on education and much of the remainder on health, leaving little for much else. For example, spending on social protection (coming under the Ministry of Human Development) was under 0.4 per cent of GDP in 2008. The CPA (2010: 202) also concluded that “the coverage of most of the [social] programmes is very low”, with educational subsidies being a key exception. In its overview summary of the challenges affecting the social sector, the 2009 poverty assessment also pointed to “political interference in the identification of beneficiaries for targeted programmes” as a key concern (2010: 211). Additionally, and as alluded to in several examples already given, a majority of citizens interviewed for this study were critical of the failure of government institutions to deliver services and often used this as a justification for turning to politicians. The pertinent implication is that had these public institutions been more effective and autonomous, political clientelism would not have had as fertile a ground on which to grow.

With regard to the alternatives to clientelism provided by non-state organisations, the record is also mixed. After a period of re-birth in the 1980s, the spike in the number and the broadening of coverage of civil society organisations continued into the 1990s, followed by a period of reduced, but still

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<sup>378</sup> See, for example, Caribbean Development Bank (2004), Katalyst (2007) and the National Human Development Advisory Committee (2005, 2008).

significant, levels of activity in the following decade.<sup>379</sup> A 2005 directory, with just a partial list of CSOs, identified over 150 NGOs, unions, community-based groups, cultural groups, religious groups, business associations, professional associations and international development agencies (Association of National Development Agencies, 2005). Over time, CSOs have lobbied for and won significant public policy space. Katalyst notes that “participation of CSOs includes membership on a wide range of policy-related bodies such as the National Human Development Advisory Committee, the National Aids Commission, the Advisory Council on the Guatemalan Claim and the Social Security Board” and that as of 2001 CSOs were given three seats in the Senate (2007: 81).<sup>380</sup> As noted, CSOs have successfully used this space to lead initiatives that have directly influenced political reforms enacted by government. It is also generally accepted that that these organisations have helped to fill some of the socio-economic development gaps of state institutions, as well as provide Belizeans with additional informal opportunities to participate and receive benefits outside of political party relationships (Witter, 2004).

However, if the expansion of CSO activity and the provision of alternative modes of informal resource allocation and participation had any diminishing effect on political clientelism, it either has been insufficient to counter-balance the expansion of clientelist activity or clientelism has expanded in spite of more CSO activity. A former director of a large NGO suggested that there is truth to the former interpretation, “I do not agree with the hypothesis that CSOs have been credible alternatives to clientelism. Belize does not have the kind of broad-based membership CSOs that provide a real alternative space to people.”<sup>381</sup> Similarly, the director of a large national NGO stated: “CSO organising has not been a deterrent to political clientelism in terms of on-going choices for solving problems. Too many of these groups come and go or have short-term projects. In a small country people catch on to this quickly. The politician is always there and don’t ask a lot of questions.”<sup>382</sup> These views suggest that, although CSO

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<sup>379</sup> See the articles by Vernon (2001), Bryd (2003) and Witter (2004) for assessments of Belizean civil society organisations.

<sup>380</sup> Based on the 2001 Constitutional Amendment, the 12 member Senate now includes three representatives of NGOs, business associations and religious institutions.

<sup>381</sup> Interview with Haylock.

<sup>382</sup> Interview with Jones.

interventions certainly have benefited some citizens, their localised focus, temporary nature and inconsistencies affect their longer-term impact as credible alternatives to clientelist relationships with politicians. Additionally, because some CSOs themselves depend on government support for subventions and exemptions, for participation in internationally-funded projects and for other favours, some argue that “some CSOs have themselves become clients of the state.”<sup>383</sup> Indeed, in a small society, in which most societal relations are dominated or influenced by political parties and personal politics, it is indeed challenging for CSOs to maintain the credibility of being non-partisan and governments have been known to use discretionary powers to reward or to punish CSOs and/or their staff.

Overall, the evidence suggests that most citizens have not perceived CSOs as credible ‘either-or’ alternatives to political clientelism. Some citizens engage simultaneously in both informal modes of participation as part of a rational assessment of maximising their opportunities. Others seem to select political clientelism as an easier and more predictable mode of accessing needs and wants. This mirrors a reflection of former prime minister Esquivel: “An innocent explanation [for the expansion of clientelism] is that the area representative is most able to identify constituents’ needs. He is closest to them and best able to deliver. People begin to believe that that’s the politician’s job.”<sup>384</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The foregoing analysis of political and socio-economic developments pinpoints the interaction of several explanatory variables in the sustained surge of political clientelism in Belize in the 1990s and thereafter. Among the four variables identified as basic supporting conditions for political clientelism, party competition between the PUP and UDP emerges as the primary explanatory variable. Certainly, the extent of control over resource allocation, unequal access to needed resources, and ineffective alternatives have played major roles. However, the increased intensity and the changing nature of the competition for votes were indispensable elements for the rampant expansion of

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<sup>383</sup> Interview with Haylock.

<sup>384</sup> Interview with Esquivel.



political clientelism to an extent that the other conditions were not. The high level of control over resource allocation institutions in the context of the Westminster model, and the ease with which such control was increased, provided local leaders with more opportunities to dispense state patronage and also higher stakes to compete for. The fact that, by the early 1990s, the PUP and UDP offered little in terms of substantive differences also favoured distinctions based on clientelist inducements. The legal and institutional framework for the management of elections proved ineffective in regulating or halting practices related to voter bribery. As such, the political context was highly supportive for clientelism to spread its roots.

In terms of supportive socio-economic developments, the most significant is the worsening situation regarding poverty and income disparities. These factors intensified the inequality of access to resources between the political elite, on the one hand, and the majority of citizens, on the other. In the existing small-state political context of high levels of two-party competition around non-substantive distinctions, poverty helped to make clientelism a preferred electoral strategy. Neoliberal economic policies, related to generous fiscal concessions to foreign investors and privatisations, not only limited the tax revenue that could have been used to address poverty more effectively, but also brought more discretionary financial resources into play for use in clientelist operations. As Shoman suggested, this externally-driven economic context also helped to promote consumerism and individualistic approaches to problem-solving.<sup>385</sup> Neither public sector nor civil society interventions have proven effective or sufficient to dampen the attraction to clientelist options. For an increasing number of citizens, personal visits to politicians hold more promise, more predictability and more immediately positive results than these alternatives.

The country-specific contextual variables that have had most relevance for how political clientelism in Belize expanded in this period are multi-ethnicity, immigration and small-state size. Diverse multi-ethnicity and the presence of immigrant communities have provided readily identifiable 'networks' through which politicians target resources to individuals and small groups, in exchange

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<sup>385</sup> Interview with Shoman.

for possible political support. Small size has facilitated and magnified the relevance of almost every other causal variable in the Belize case. Most significantly, by facilitating familiar dyadic political relationships between politicians and citizens, it sped up the expansion of clientelist politics.

The duelling views of most politicians, who see handouts as responding to unending citizens' demands, and of many citizens, who cast blame on 'thieving' politicians for deliberately generating dependence through handouts in the pursuit of political power, beg the question as to whether the expansion of clientelism spurred on by competitive party politics has been more of a top-down and supply-driven consequence of politicians' desire to win, or more of a bottom-up and demand-driven phenomenon. The Belize case clearly points to different motivations at different phases in the trajectory of expanding clientelism. In the period before independence and in the first decade thereafter, clientelism was decidedly more top-down in orientation. In the formative pre-independence period, George Price and the PUP had proactively begun to respond to unmet needs by giving small handouts. In the 1980s and much of the 1990s, clientelist transfers were still mostly supply-driven, as political parties experienced the major influx of private funds and perfected the art of directing public resources to influence individual political support.

However, sometime in the late 1990s the balance began to swing more towards demand-driven motivations as a critical mass of citizens learnt the game after decades of raised expectations and the failure of formal state institutions and civil society to meet socio-economic needs adequately. For those citizens who have become clients, it has been another, albeit informal way to engage the state and influence allocations. For poorer clients the imperative is to solve problems related to addressing social need and wants. For middle-class clients it is to gain advantages on an unlevel playing field. In short, more people learnt that their votes are valuable commodities that can be easily bartered to willing politicians in a political context in which this is the biggest or, sometimes, only game in town. Over time, the bartering power of clients has been flexed in such ways that it is as likely for voters to tell politicians, whom they see as enriching themselves, what they want for their political support, as it is for politicians to

make offers of bribery. There was a point, likely just around the 1998 election, at which more citizens came to view handouts as entitlements. As such, the status quo of political clientelism began to resemble more a political relationship of mutual and self-enforcing dependency between people and their political leaders, than one mostly of top-down dominance. Additionally, the increased reliance on private money to fund handout activities brought a critical change to the hierarchical dimension of clientelist politics in Belize: the dual role of politicians as patrons to many but clients to a few.

# CHAPTER 4

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## **BELIZEAN DEMOCRACY IN AN ERA OF ENTRENCHED CLIENTELISM**

### **Introduction**

How then, has Belize's democracy been affected by the expansion and entrenchment of clientelist politics in the 30 years since independence? The mainstream view in Belize mirrors the overwhelmingly negative verdict described in the scholarship. However, there are also arguments that political clientelism has a valuable distributive function and promotes political engagement between Belizeans and their political leaders. This chapter examines the merits of such apparently opposed assessments, and essays a 'balance' of the implications of entrenched political clientelism for Belizean democracy. Belize's small size and recent experience as an independent democratic state facilitate this exercise. It is important to focus on several layers of clientelist relationships ranging from the tens of thousands of dyadic citizen-politician interactions (that have largely informal institutional expression at the level of dozens of constituency clinic units), the political parties, private donors, non-state groups, and ultimately the state's macro-political institutions and processes.

As outlined in the Introduction, this thesis conceptualises democracy as a context-driven goal strived for through an on-going, dynamic and participatory process that includes, but is not limited to, formal institutions of government. The chapter thus approaches the complex challenge of analysing the impact of clientelism on democracy by examining implications for three narrower but overlapping sub-concepts: formal democracy, participatory democracy and social democracy. As such, it borrows from the conceptualisation of substantive democracy employed by scholars such as Huber et al. (1997) and Hinds (2008). Formal democracy—Westminster democracy in the Belize case—is identified by the presence of political institutions and basic civil liberties that facilitate the election of leaders who make political decisions on behalf of citizens. As Huber

et al. (1997: 324) argued, 'participatory democracy' is defined broadly as "high levels of participation without systematic differences across social categories" and as inclusive of, but additional to, electoral democracy. In this conceptualisation, the ultimate goal of democratisation is progress in 'social democracy' as measured by "increasing equality in social and economic outcomes" (Huber et al., 1997: 324). As such, social democracy, which is often referred to as substantive democracy, presumes that effective formal democracy and participatory democracy are necessary but not sufficient prerequisites for democracy. As Hinds (2008: 404) put it, "The presence of formal democratic institutions and practices are indispensable to democratisation" but they must "involve substantive elements such as the broad participation of the masses of people in decision making and an absence of group dominance" and "also be rooted in the quest for equality and social justice."

Following this analytical approach, the first section of this chapter examines the implications of entrenched clientelism presented for the electoral processes, public institutions and political parties that are essential to formal democracy in Belize's parliamentary system. The second section focuses on participatory democracy beyond elections, including implications of clientelism for informal political influence and problem-solving, day-to-day relationships between citizens and elected representatives, and the work of civil society organisations. A third section explores the consequences for social and economic outcomes, including resource distribution and social welfare, public policy and reform, and fiscal performance and public accountability.

## **Implications of Clientelism for the Institutions and Processes of Formal Democracy**

### ***Consequences for Voting and Elections***

In addition to the positive democracy record of seven free and fair elections with high levels of voter turnout since independence, there has been no proven instance of ballot-rigging in Belize and losing parties have accepted election

results immediately or eventually.<sup>386</sup> Also, as the 20 per cent estimate of Belizeans engaged in clientelism implies, a majority of Belizeans have voted for politicians for reasons other than clientelism or in addition to clientelism. Due to a lack of pertinent, credible data and to the complexity inherent in voter motivations, it is challenging to disentangle these motivations—even after accepting that the 20 per cent estimate is decidedly conservative. One aspect of the challenge is that voters can have overlapping motivations to vote for a candidate and/or party. For example, the ‘snapshot’ results of a SPEAR poll (2005: 3) showed significant overlap among the voter motivations of ‘party vision’, ‘gifts’, ‘candidate’ and ‘family influence’. However, some trends are observable. On a broader and comparative-historical level of analysis, the last chapter demonstrated how voters have had to choose between candidates of two parties that have become less programmatic and more clientelistic since the 1950s. Yet both parties still maintain some programmatic features that likely have had some influence on voting decisions. This was suggested by a SPEAR poll before the 2008 election that found that most respondents (52.8 per cent) would still vote based on ‘issues’ (SPEAR, 2008: 9).

It is not surprising that there is a widely held belief that both the PUP and the UDP now have a smaller and decreasing proportion of the electorate as core supporters compared to the 1980.<sup>387</sup> SPEAR polls (2006, 2008)—asking about support for the PUP and UDP—found that no party polled over one-third support of respondents. As illustrated (Chapter 3, section 1), some recent surveys have suggested that at least one-third of the electorate is undecided and without core party preferences. The implication is that a significant portion of the electorate is potentially open to other voting motivations. The 2008 SPEAR poll that found that 52.8 per cent of respondents would vote on ‘issues’ also suggested that 20.6 per cent would vote for the ‘candidate’, 12.6 per cent based on ‘party loyalty’ and 8.2 per cent based on ‘family influence’. The absence of exit polling data makes it impossible to assess how these numbers held up in the 2008 election. What is likely is that voters in the ‘none-core party’

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<sup>386</sup> The results of a small number of constituency elections have been challenged in court, but none has been successfully overturned.

<sup>387</sup> Based on the author’s interviews with politicians, the estimates of core party support range for 20-25 per cent of the total electorate.

category make up much of the swing vote that has resulted in both parties alternating in office. As discussed later in this chapter, the issues of corruption and economic hardships—i.e., reasons to be dissatisfied with the incumbent—are among the more significant influences on decisions to ‘swing’.

However, some of the reasons why some voters do not participate in clientelism are related to the nature of clientelism itself. Interviews with citizens indicated that there are some in the electorate who find the exchange of political support for resources to be distasteful and/or immoral. For example, a few interviewees stated that they would never tarnish their names by joining or being seen in clinic lines—especially in a small country where such actions are difficult to hide. Another reason is related to the frustrations (expressed by some politicians and clients alike) that there are just not enough clientelist handouts to meet the demand and/or recruit more clients. The finite nature of resources and favours available for clientelism may indeed have a ‘ceiling’ effect on client numbers.

What is clear is that the incidence of political clientelism in Belize (almost all politicians and at least one-fifth of the electorate engaging in some aspect of clientelist politics) has worrying implications even for its positive record of formal and electoral democracy. To the extent that clientelist voters engage in direct vote trading, this level of clientelism has serious implications for Belize’s electoral democracy. It makes elections results suspect, casts doubts on the meaning of the vote and, in the words of Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2007: 339), “corrupts the concept of free will.” As Stokes (2007: 607) observed in the case of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional in México, “One cannot infer a [clientelist] party’s popularity from its electoral successes.” It can also be said that one cannot always predict a party’s electoral prospects from its aptitude at clientelism. These realities assist in explaining why the PUP continued to win elections after it lost popularity in the 1970s and why incumbent PUP and UDP governments have lost elections since independence. As Hyde (2011a) contended, pre-independence election results in the 1950s and 1960s were more “authentic” because the majority of people supported the PUP in issue-

based elections and “you couldn’t buy votes in those days.”<sup>388</sup> Hyde lamented that by 2011, due largely to the prevalence of handouts and the need for tens of millions of dollars to run an election campaign, Belizeans have watched “democracy being bought out.” Indeed, the strategy of buying political support in Belize began to influence some constituency elections even in the 1970s, and, thereafter, has been underestimated as a factor in interpreting election results.

Assessments of election results 30 years after independence must necessarily consider that as much as one-fifth of the electorate is potentially voting based on clientelist inducements. It begs the question of how many constituency elections—and, by extension, general elections—have turned on vote trading in particular and political clientelism more broadly. Clearly, most politicians believe that they do or, at least, that they can—as indicated by the existence and continued growth of their elaborate clinic operations and by the increase in the number of allegations of opponents buying elections at every level. Nonetheless, the relative success of clientelism in securing votes is more clearly seen in intra-party conventions and constituency elections. With regard to the latter, there is now a clear direct relationship between those constituencies characterised as ‘safe’ and those known to have the most effective clientelist operations. Examples include the Belize City constituencies of Fort George, Queen’s Square and Mesopotamia, which have all returned incumbents in every election since 1984 with winning majorities averaging over 70 per cent. The Corozal South East constituency, held by master ‘patron’ politician Florencio Marin Sr. for the PUP from 1965 until 2003, and now held by his son, remains the only constituency never lost by a political party. Indeed, it is highly likely that clientelism has overtaken personal popularity and party affiliation as the primary cause of homogenous voting in Belize’s elections.<sup>389</sup>

The existence of entrenched clientelism also implies that some voter turnout figures deserve more scrutiny. The Belize case indicates that, at the constituency level, voter turnout can either increase due partly to clientelist inducements or decrease when fewer resources flow and when there is

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<sup>388</sup> As this thesis shows, it is more accurate to say that buying votes was less prevalent, not totally absent, in this pre-independence period.

<sup>389</sup> The term ‘homogenous voting’ is used here in the sense used by Figueroa and Sives (2002: 81-108) to refer to voters in particular polling areas voting overwhelmingly for one candidate.



negative vote buying—that is paying targeted voters to abstain.<sup>390</sup> For example, the 90.1 per cent record turnout for the 1998 election coincided with the largest inflow of private money (much of it from Ashcroft) into general elections up to that date. Moreover, according to several politicians, negative vote buying has become a tactic increasingly used in some marginal constituencies. After the 2012 election there was widespread speculation in UDP circles that the historically low voter turnout in Belize City constituencies (averaging in the low 60s percentile range) was due both to a relative decrease in the overall volume of resources for vote buying and to negative vote buying.<sup>391</sup> As one informant put it, “Some UDP candidates on the south-side [Belize City] were alarmed that the people they have helped all these years were not coming out to vote.”<sup>392</sup> The wider implication is that in the Belize context of tiny constituencies and increasing poverty, clientelist exchanges do actually swing constituency elections and affect voter turnout.

As noted, it was after the 1998 election, and the spike in the level of political clientelism, that ‘the vote’ as a tradable commodity began to increase in proportion to ‘the vote’ as a true indicator of the voice of the majority. Although the game of negotiating the exchange of resources for political support is now year-round, it is in the heat of election campaigns that the degree of acceptance of the vote as commodity can be most nakedly observed. One indicator is the now open way in which politicians encourage the electorate to accept money and other resources from political opponents, but not vote for them. For example, in the 1998 election, the opposition PUP encouraged voters to, “Tek di blue note [from the UDP government], but vote blue [PUP].”<sup>393</sup> In 2008, after accusing the PUP of trying to buy the elections with the Venezuela grant, a host on the radio station of the opposition UDP advised people to ‘go get some of the

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<sup>390</sup> See Schaffer (2006; 2005), Morgan (2012) and Wang and Kuzman (2007) for comprehensive descriptions of the tactics generally associated with vote buying and negative vote buying. The key point they all make is that a mix of these practices generally increases the predictability of elections for politicians. Nichter (2008: 19) has argued that vote buying is sometimes mistaken for what he terms ‘turnout buying’.

<sup>391</sup> This assessment is based on the author’s confidential post-mortem discussions of the 2012 election with UDP party operatives in March 2012. The exact accusation was that PUP operatives were paying known UDP supporters not to vote.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

<sup>393</sup> Blue (the colour of a BZ\$100 note) is also the official PUP party colour.

money'.<sup>394</sup> One 'e-poster' issued by elements of the opposition PUP before the 2012 election encouraged voters to, "Tek di passport, tek di ham, tek di money, tek di land. But stick to di plan. Vote PUP."<sup>395</sup> Ironically, in all these cases, politicians of the opposition party were also actively engaged in political clientelism.

The entrenched acceptance of the 'vote as commodity' among a significant segment of the electorate is further illustrated by the failure of the only extended public education initiative to discourage it.<sup>396</sup> The Association of Concerned Belizeans (ACB) launched an information campaign in 2006 under the theme "No sell yu vote, Vote yu mind" to educate the voting public about the integrity and secrecy of the vote.<sup>397</sup> As one of the leaders of this campaign related, the ACB became aware that poor people "would still take money" and "you can't tell them not to take it, but you can tell them to still vote their mind."<sup>398</sup> By 2007, and after realising that the message was falling on deaf ears, the ACB changed the campaign name to "Tek di money, Vote yu mind."<sup>399</sup> The ACB leader added, "We just didn't see people understanding the 'don't take the money' line when poverty is so high and people need to survive."<sup>400</sup> Notwithstanding the logic of this rationale, the revised message encouraged deception, if not also illegal and indictable acts of bribery. Lawrence (2006: 2) alluded to this problem: "Buying and selling votes strike at the very heart of Belizean democracy" because "we cannot ask them [voters] to do the right thing after we have entreated them to do something wrong." The short-lived ACB campaign had no noticeable impact on the upward trajectory of vote trading as a preferred electoral tactic.

It is also quite evident that political clientelism has contributed to blemishing the principle of ballot secrecy that is so intrinsic to electoral democracy. Although no exit polling data exist, pockets of doubt about ballot secrecy have long existed in the Belizean populace, and political clientelism has likely heightened levels of distrust. Interviews with citizens conducted for this thesis confirm that there is

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<sup>394</sup> Venezuela Millions are Here but Not for Everyone. (2008, January 13). *Reporter*.

<sup>395</sup> See a copy of this poster in Appendix 6.

<sup>396</sup> There have been rare opinion pieces in the press condemning the practice of vote buying. See, for example, Selling Out: How Much is Your Vote Worth. (2007, January, 12). *Independent*.

<sup>397</sup> ACB Launches Campaign Against Vote buying. (2006, February 1). *Channel 5 News*.

<sup>398</sup> Interview with Allan Sharp, former executive member of ACB, 11 April 2011.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>400</sup> *Ibid.*

some belief, especially at the grassroots level, that politicians can find out how individuals vote. Indeed, the extent of such doubt has prompted some limited voter education efforts by the Elections and Boundaries Department<sup>401</sup> and by a few CSOs such as the ACB. The link to clientelism is straightforward, albeit difficult to prove: politicians try to find out if clients keep promises to vote for them, or simply make clients believe that there are ways to find out how they voted. As illustrated, Belizean politicians have used various tactics to achieve these ends, including having voters take photos of ballots or flash ballots to official party scrutinisers. Simply planting a seed of doubt in voters' minds (that politicians can find out) is, sometimes, as effective. Such tactics to monitor voter compliance are highly effective in Belize, where small constituency size means that few persons can be truly anonymous. The pertinent point here is that if ballot secrecy is compromised or in doubt because some voters feel obligated to prove that they voted for particular political patrons, the concept of voting by free will is further tarnished.

Furthermore, there is also the important issue of what the clientelist vote represents after elections are over. For some, it means receiving resources that were promised before the vote. For others, who have already received some form of payment, it may be waiting until the next election or partisan event to play the game again. One politician referred to the latter category of clientelist voters as 'election day people', meaning that they get a lot at election time and then are given less attention at day-to-day clinic operations after elections.<sup>402</sup> Another argued, "If you [the voters] take a handout, be it \$50 or a sack of rice, some politicians believe that they don't have to work for you, that they already 'worked' for you and paid you. And you can only sell your vote once."<sup>403</sup> In one of his columns, Hyde (2011) took this point further when he stated that voters in Belize "can't be taking handouts from politicians and then expect them to be answerable after they are elected."

The overall argument here is that votes or political support 'sold' in the informal game of clientelism have provided politicians—and, by extension,

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<sup>401</sup> See, for example, *A Voter Education Framework* (Elections and Boundaries Department, 2003).

<sup>402</sup> Interview with Leslie.

<sup>403</sup> Interview with Pulcheria Teul, Senator and constituency aspirant (UDP), 7 March 2011, Punta Gorda.

governments—with another excuse for not delivering resources to particular citizens. In this regard, the Belize case supports Breeding's (2007: 821) finding that, "vote buying may constrain the policy representation of some citizens relative to others because some prospective voters may express policy options contrary to their actual preferences to receive material inducements from politicians." The related argument by Stokes (2004: 16-17) is also relevant to the Belize case: "Vote buying keeps parties and governments from considering the policy interests of poor voters who sell their votes." As it does elsewhere in the region, the entrenchment of clientelist politics as normal political behaviour means that voting has lost some of its lustre as the primary means of conveying the free electoral will of Belizeans. In the process, elections in Belize have increasingly become a competition between two, large clientelist parties seeking a turn at the powers of the state to, among other goals, further maximise clientelist opportunities.

### ***The Institutional Impact on Political Parties***

By the end of the bridging phase (1981-circa 1990) of clientelism, and progressively more during the rampant phase (circa 1991-2011), intense competition between the PUP and the UDP was central to the increased prevalence of clientelist politician-citizen relationships. This development has had considerable institutional implications for the two parties themselves. Even as the post-independence expansion of political clientelism was facilitated by diluted ideological differences between the two major parties, entrenched clientelism itself became another disincentive for the parties and candidates to develop and offer distinctive political philosophies and national visions. As Goetz (2007: 408-409) argued, clientelist appeals "undermine the incentives to political parties to make broad programmatic appeals to the electorate, encouraging instead narrowly focused promise-making and clientelist resource distribution." This is not to suggest that all programmatic relationships in Belize ceased, but rather to emphasise that both parties further evolved to become primarily clientelist in order to seek competitive electoral advantage. One manifestation of the disincentive for the parties to differentiate themselves in substantive ways is what Stokes (2007: 621) referred to as the lack of "legislative cohesion" of clientelist parties as they move in and out of power.

Even when a party takes what appears to be a principled or ideological position, such as the nationalisation of public utilities by the UDP between 2008 and 2012, closer examination reveals motivations of political expediency rather than any deep ideological or principled underpinnings. As noted, the PUP, after critiquing these nationalisations, committed itself to maintaining majority government ownership if elected in 2012. In short, clientelism has further pushed the parties towards being carbon copies of each other—or what some Belizeans sarcastically dub the People’s United Democratic Party (PUDP).<sup>404</sup>

The gradual, then rapid, shift of party electoral strategy towards clientelism has also contributed to both parties de-prioritising mass membership recruitment around national policy objectives. The incentive to seek collective organisational support outside the party has also diminished. In particular, the labour unions, on whose backs party politics had initially developed, have been further marginalised from internal party processes as clientelist approaches to individual citizens have proved successful.<sup>405</sup> Instead, as each party has sought to out-compete the other with clientelist appeals, and as these appeals have proved electorally successful, there have been more incentives to set up and fund larger constituency-based clientelist operations. At the constituency level, party membership (to the extent it is pursued at all) is based less on a belief in party visions and more on which party can deliver the most resources to citizens as individuals. Indeed, the primary focus of party organisation at the constituency level has increasingly become that of building a client-membership base, rather than citizen-party membership based on programmatic appeals.

The Belize case also indicates that as the two parties have come to view constituents less as ‘cause-inspired’ members and more as clients, constituents view the parties more as channels for individualised influence and less for collective influence. The Belize case thus broadly conforms to Goetz’s (2007: 408-409) assessment that clientelism discourages citizens, and especially poor citizens, from organising “on the basis of shared interests in better service

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<sup>404</sup> See, for example, Machine Politics. (2012, February 14). *Amandala*; and The Disillusioned Electorate. (2012, January 23). *Amandala*.

<sup>405</sup> Unions in other Commonwealth Caribbean states have had similar experiences. For Latin America, Levitsky (2007: 206-226) shows that although unions in several countries remained strong, their relationships with political parties became generally clientelist.

provision. Instead the incentives are to ‘fight’ each other in order to be the privileged recipients of targeted transfers.” Indeed, as Shoman argued, the optic of being seen to be with a political party, or having the parties believe that one is, is a critical survival strategy in Belize’s small-state clientelism context: “People feel that they need to associate with a political party, even if it is in opposition, or they are not in play. They won’t get jobs, help and protection. If you are totally independent, nobody [messes] with you. And this goes for all classes.”<sup>406</sup> In short, one cannot easily deduce the breadth of the real membership bases of the PUP and UDP by their abilities to draw crowds or by their lists of card-carrying members. As such, clientelism has transformed and diluted the meaning of party membership.

The Belize case also conforms well with Stokes’ (2007: 619) observation that clientelism “promotes decentralised parties due to the inherent informality of clientelist politics.” The expansion of clientelism has indeed contributed to less central party control of constituency-based operations and less interest in the accountability of these operations. Whereas constituency party offices are constitutionally part of a party’s organisational structure, the dominant clinic operations within them are de facto informal structures with varying degrees of independence from central party organs. Individual politicians organise themselves to seek resources for their clinic operations far beyond what the party can provide, and the party hierarchy has less interest in monitoring what their politicians do at their clinics—as long as this contributes to electoral victory. Prime Minister Barrow hinted at this sentiment at a public forum in 2011. After praising politicians from both political parties for helping to meet the everyday needs of their individual constituents through the distribution of assistance, he confessed that, “sometimes I am afraid to enquire how they [UDP representatives] do this...and I hope it is not at the price of selling their souls for financing” (Barrow, 2011).

Another significant institutional implication for both the PUP and UDP indeed relates to the financing of clinic operations. Just as the influx of money into the parties in the 1990s facilitated the rise of clientelism, expanding clientelism

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<sup>406</sup> Interview with Shoman.

became the driving imperative behind the funding needs of the political parties. As illustrated, the majority of the funds needed by most politicians are for clientelist operations outside the immediate campaign period—including the increasing costs of intra-party competition. The end result is an ever-growing competitive intensity to fund clientelist networks. This monetary snow-ball effect has been aptly and colourfully described by a broker: “If one politician gives people chicken for five years and then all of a sudden the opponent gives shrimp...then we all have to give shrimp to compete...and so on and so on.”<sup>407</sup> This suggests that clientelism in Belize has had a self-perpetuating inflationary effect on the financing of political parties. This, in turn, has had significant downstream implications for other aspects of democratic governance.

One of these impacts is on the calibre and the motivations of politicians who decide to enter electoral politics and/or who are selected by the political parties. Some politicians themselves lament that the public service motive has been diluted by the ‘do it or lose’ implications of handout politics. A former politician reflected: “It results in poor quality of candidates. In the first instance, in needy candidates who see it as a way to enrich themselves and, in the other, of well-to-do candidates for whom the salary is peanuts...but the other financial rewards are great.”<sup>408</sup> A civil society leader made the point that politicians on the whole have less incentive “really to learn the problems that affect their divisions and the nation since the focus is on delivering at the individual level.”<sup>409</sup> He lamented that newcomers with little or no experience, no policy skills and no distinguishing policy positions can and do win elections by using handouts.<sup>410</sup> The overall picture is of a dilution in the quality of political leadership over time, of electoral politics being less attractive to newcomers and of a nation being short-changed of accessing its best talent. Also, when some politicians do become candidates and/or get elected, they complain about the distastefulness of the permanent need to meet and/or avoid constituents and the never-ending need to seek more resources. Over time, political clientelism becomes a catch-22 for both parties and their politicians, in that not playing

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<sup>407</sup> Interview with Broker Dan.

<sup>408</sup> Interview with Mark Espat.

<sup>409</sup> Interview with Jones.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.

means not winning or not having a chance to win, and playing perpetuates the game even further.

***‘Going Through Me’: Weakening of Government Institutions***

Even though the majority of public institutions in Belize, and especially those with responsibilities for resource allocation, have significant pre-existing institutional weaknesses, these have been exacerbated by clientelist politics. Central to this impact is the on-going clientelist imperative to increase partisan control over public institutions of resource allocation with the objective of expanding opportunities for handouts to individual constituents. One tested politician described the general approach succinctly: “In Cabinet, ministers make it clear that they want to deal directly with their constituents. There is now an ‘everything going through me’ mentality so that [the politician] can benefit. Ministers do not want to use state institutions. These are seen as too slow, with too many rules and no sure political benefit. And remember that the people are impatient and want needs met now.”<sup>411</sup> As illustrated, the mechanisms that politicians in government use to maximise such clientelist opportunities from public institutions fall under two broad categories: directing resources to particular constituents through influence over existing institutions and programmes, and creating new or ‘special’ allocation programmes. Taken collectively, the expansion of public resources ‘going through’ politicians—and not the state institutions established for these purposes—results in clientelist operations gradually supplementing and/or displacing some of the intended functions of these institutions, weakening and undermining them in the process.

To further demonstrate these damaging institutional implications, it is worth exploring at some length the specific case of the Human Services Department (HSD) of the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation.<sup>412</sup> Although departments in several other ministries have a social assistance role, the HSD is primarily designed to provide such services on behalf of government. It is directly responsible for the government’s limited social welfare and social safety-net interventions, including those for the most

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<sup>411</sup> Interview with F. Fonseca.

<sup>412</sup> Basic information on the HSD comes from the parent ministry’s website and from documents provided to the author by staff.



vulnerable children, families and older persons. Individual citizens can visit human development officers at the ministry's main office or its district offices to seek assistance. In the three fiscal years from 2009 through 2012, the HSD was allocated an annual average budget of some \$3,000,000, one-third of the tiny budget of the ministry (Ministry of Finance, 2009: 381; 2010: 391; 2011: 385).<sup>413</sup> Most of the HSD's share is used for social assistance grants to the most needy, either for long-term social assistance (in the form of small weekly grants of \$10) or for immediate and emergency assistance, such as pauper funerals and help for fire victims.

As does the general public, politicians from both sides of the partisan fence identify the HSD as a 'failed institution' that is unable to meet the welfare needs of the population. Pre-existing institutional challenges apart, the failure of the HSD to provide effective social welfare can also be directly linked to the clientelist practices of successive parties in government. Despite the tiny budget, politicians have manoeuvred to access and target the HSD's grant funds to particular individual constituents. The most common approach involves ministers and area representatives making direct verbal or written requests for HSD assistance for particular constituents to the minister or the senior staff responsible.<sup>414</sup> Additionally, because the resources of the HSD are so limited, politicians have increasingly accessed non-HSD funds for social welfare assistance to constituents, including constituency stipends, the discretionary assistance budgets of other ministries and private sector donations.

The negative institutional implications for the HSD are myriad. Staff members and regular operating procedures are often side-lined by partisans in making decisions on resource allocation.<sup>415</sup> Decisions on who receives the paltry assistance resources of the HSD are not always made on the strict imperatives of need and merit, as procedurally mandated, but sometimes on the basis of clientelist interests. As more social assistance funds come from clinic operations and from other public institutions, the HSD's reputation as a failed institution is perpetuated and exacerbated. Over time, citizens have less

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<sup>413</sup> The entire ministry's annual budget averaged \$9,000,000 over this period—only 1.3 per cent of the total national budget. National budget data are sourced from [www.mof.gov.bz](http://www.mof.gov.bz).

<sup>414</sup> Interviewee's name withheld on request.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid.

confidence in the capacity of the HSD to address their needs and begin to view political clinic operations as more a responsive and more effective alternative. One result is the aforementioned phenomenon of more citizens going directly to politicians for personalised social assistance services. In this regard, one politician tellingly referred to political clinics as ‘informal appellate courts’<sup>416</sup> that service constituents who do not get assistance, or at least not quickly enough. The public credibility of the HSD, as well as that of other public institutions, is further stained by the increased frequency of special and temporary programmes that pass ‘through’ politicians and target specific groups with obvious clientelist purpose. Conspicuous examples include the Christmas Assistance Programme of December 2011, in which \$40,000 was ‘distributed’ to each of the 31 constituencies to allow UDP representatives and aspirants to deliver goodies to constituents,<sup>417</sup> as well as the ‘special assistance’ scheme three months later, in which each constituency received another \$50,000 of public funds to be disbursed at the discretion of the UDP’s 31 candidates.<sup>418</sup> These are funds which the HSD could easily have made good use of.

This dismal scenario plays out in institutions across the public service. For almost every resource and service provided by these institutions, politicians seek to exert enough discretionary control to have disbursement go ‘through’ them and ‘around’ institutional processes so as to facilitate clientelist exchanges. The example of the ‘Venezuela money’ stands out as particularly blatant. As previously noted, since the 1990s even emergency humanitarian relief funds made available in the aftermath of natural disasters are not immune from the clientelist web. However, it is the institutions that have responsibility for the goods and services most traded in clientelist exchanges that are most impacted. Apart from the HSD, these include those institutions responsible for education and health assistance, housing support, land distribution, immigration services, development-related loans and grants, trade licensing and tax concessions. Within existing discretionary procedures, or in spite of them, ministers and partisan employees in these institutions make or influence

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<sup>416</sup> Interview with Marin.

<sup>417</sup> PM Reports on Controversial Christmas Assistance Programme. (2012, January, 13). *7 News*; and Political Christmas Assistance Programme is Vote Buying Says PUP and VIP. (2011, December 23). *Amandala*.

<sup>418</sup> Lavish Spending to Seduce the Electorate. (2012, February 2). *Channel 5 News*.

decisions regarding which individuals receive goods and services, fee waivers and contracts. Such practices have become the *modus operandi* for a significant portion of the population, and politicians have ever-diminishing incentives to strengthen public institutions such as the HSD. Indeed, institutional weaknesses are viewed as advantageous and more conducive to the desired informality of the clientelist game.

As mentioned before, incumbent politicians have also targeted funds of semi-autonomous statutory bodies to use as clientelist inducements. In the process, the institutional reputations of some services they provide have become tarnished. One case in point is the Non-Contributory Pension (NCP) programme of the Social Security Board. The NCP was launched in 2003 (ostensibly as part of the PUP government's poverty alleviation initiative) with the goal of providing a small monthly pension to poor females (over 65 years of age) who had not contributed as workers in the past. In 2007 males (over 67 years of age) were made eligible and the \$75 monthly stipend was increased to \$100, and by 2010 there were some 3,900 recipients, 55 per cent of whom were female (Belize Social Security Board, 2010: 3). From the onset, constituency representatives and candidates attempted to influence who were selected as recipients<sup>419</sup> and—even as the NCP's appointed committee has significantly improved the application process and eligibility criteria—the NCP is still seen by many as a part of the handout game.<sup>420</sup> This view was publicly expressed by a board member of a credible NGO set up to assist older persons:

The NCP is a good idea—to get very poor older people some help—but it went bad. It began largely as a political gimmick in 2003 [an election year] and people have gotten on it due largely to partisan affiliation. There are stories about people getting on or off the list as parties change. Even recently arrived immigrants who are here for less than five years are said to be on the list. Unfortunately it is not sustainable and a drain on those actually contributing. It is not a long-term solution to a real problem.<sup>421</sup>

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<sup>419</sup> A review of the minutes of the NCP Committee for 2003 indicates that the NCP was hurriedly set up without clear criteria, and that these developed in reaction to problems as they arose (Non-Contributory Pension Committee, 2003).

<sup>420</sup> Numerous citizens interviewed for this study shared this view. One citizen interviewee in Punta Gorda complained that he had lobbied his representative but had not gotten on the scheme because he was from the wrong party (Interview with Constituent TE21, 18 February 2011, Punta Gorda Town). Another claimed that recent immigrants, who were not residents, were receiving NCP stipends (Interview with Constituent B2, 2, March 2011, Belmopan).

<sup>421</sup> Statement made by Lindy Jeffery, board member of VOICE on *Rise and Shine* (live radio talk show), 13 March 2011, Belize. The total annual cost of the NCP in 2010 was circa \$4,500,000 (Interview with Jones).

The overall impact on public institutions is captured well by the head of an inter-governmental social reform programme: “Handouts and the ‘clinic syndrome’ undermine government institutions, some of which are already limping. People have declining respect for them, and they break down even more as people get more from the informal system.”<sup>422</sup> Similarly, a former politician argued, “Something has to give for handout politics to increase; our national institutions fail and delivery through them declines.”<sup>423</sup> In short, as Goetz (2007: 408-09) contended, “Loyalties and networks based on informal ascriptive institutions infuse public formal institutions” and “work at cross-purposes to formal incentive and accountability systems.” Thirty years after Belize’s independence, this informal allocation system, based on clientelism, has become more normal and institutionalised, at the expense of formally established institutions and procedures.

### ***The Impact of Expanding Job Patronage***

The spread of job patronage associated with entrenched political clientelism presents other hard challenges for governance institutions. As demonstrated, even though governing parties already have majority appointment powers over most key public service posts, they still devise creative strategies to reward or attract partisan supporters with the incentive of public service jobs. At the highest level, some link the discontinuation of the Westminster tradition of permanent secretaries and the introduction of CEOs on contract directly to the politicisation of public institutions. These critically important posts have been increasingly filled by trusted partisans who, as contractees, have more incentives to facilitate clientelist objectives.

However, the most worrying institutional impact of job patronage occurs in the lower ranks of the public service—especially in relation to temporary workers on contract. Although the Public Service Commission approves the hiring for public offices, ministers routinely seek to influence which persons are nominated to fill permanent posts.<sup>424</sup> The original intent of the open vote category (to allow for short-term hiring in order to supplement existing staff) has been abused. For

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<sup>422</sup> Interview with Mary Vasquez, Director, Restore Belize, 7 April 2011, Belize City.

<sup>423</sup> Interview with Mark Espat.

<sup>424</sup> Interview with Gibson.

such hires, there is no requirement to use the formal employment process established for permanent staff. Ministers have near total say, and, when in government, both major parties have engaged in the practice of hiring growing numbers of people in non-permanent categories. Consequently, the number of public officers in these categories has jumped from miniscule numbers at independence to some 39 per cent of the public service in 2012—two-thirds of which are open vote workers. The critical institutional implication here is that temporary workers are generally subject to widespread hiring and dismissal as parties in government change. After every change of government, both major political parties hypocritically lambast the other with public accusations of patronage, job-based victimisation and paying workers to do little or no work.

The many negative consequences of highly politicised job patronage for the public service have been acknowledged by several governance assessments, including the reports of the PRC (2000), the Public Sector Reform Council (2000) and the Management Audit (2004). These have pointed to the hiring of ill-qualified persons, the dismissal of persons in whom training resources have been invested, the lack of institutional continuity, low morale among public officers, inaction brought on by fear of job victimisation and low productivity. As such, the expansion of job patronage has contributed significantly to making the public service and its institutions less effective and less fair in the delivery of services to citizens.

## **Implications for Alternatives Modes of Political Participation**

### ***Engaging Constituency Representatives as Political Participation***

Because political clientelism is not confined to election campaigns and because political support goes beyond voting, it is necessary to expand the analysis of its implications beyond formal democracy. As Lazar (2004: 228) argued, from the viewpoint of citizens, clientelism can be conceptualised as “a part of citizenship practice, a means of engaging with the state in the person of the politician”, and “through which citizens attempt to make politics, and politicians, more representative and responsive.” In Belize’s version of parliamentary democracy, this informal mode of citizen engagement transpires in the daily relationship of

citizens with their representatives. This occurs in spite of the fact that the only formal constitutional role of these representatives is “to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Belize” (Government of Belize, 2008: Article 68). Yet, as in all representative democracies, the unwritten practice is that representatives ‘look out’ for their respective constituencies and constituents lobby representatives for attention and benefits. Representatives who are appointed to cabinet generally have more opportunities to do so. Apart from contact during campaigns and participating in the occasional consultations on national policies and programmes held by representatives, constituents have two primary and broad means of engaging their representatives between elections: political clientelism and participating in constituency-level community development activities.

As political clientelism has expanded since independence, representatives have come to self-identify and to be viewed by a growing proportion of the electorate as problem-solvers and welfare agents of first resort. Constituents either play the game because they believe it delivers more quickly (than formal channels), or because they have come to expect that their representatives should provide for individual needs and wants. For less needy and higher income constituents who play the clientelist game, the conclusion is similar, except that representatives are seen less as welfare agents and more as facilitators of benefits. Apart from the proliferation of political clinics and the high demand for their services from constituents, a key indicator of the significance of the representatives’ welfare agent and ‘benefit facilitator’ roles is the proportion of their time they dedicate to these activities. The assessments of three representatives, who also served as ministers, illuminate this point:

Constituency work certainly takes more of my time than government work. My CEO and staff take care of the ministry work mostly, and I spend most of my time dealing with constituency needs...and mostly on a case by case basis. I am in the division an average of five days a week. The time I give to policy and ministry work is certainly affected.<sup>425</sup>

After a while, politicians become hostages to the handout system. We end up spending most of our time on the business of delivering [handouts] in the division and less time

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<sup>425</sup> Interview with Eden Martinez, Minister of Human Development and Social Transformation (UDP), 14 February 2011, Punta Gorda Town.

doing national work. We [representatives] have to run from the people sometimes or could spend all the time dealing with requests.<sup>426</sup>

Handout politics messes up the concept and practice of representation as defined in the constitution. It should be to influence national policy, in the interest of people, in the House. But dealing with handouts becomes a major proportion of representatives' time and resources. We are judged by the amounts we deliver and not by how we vote in the House.<sup>427</sup>

Conversely, some representatives, who claim to devote significant time to ministerial responsibilities, see these as constraints on their constituency time. One former minister reported that spending an average of three days per week on ministry work in Belmopan meant less time for constituents, and that those representatives who have no ministerial role have a time advantage.<sup>428</sup> The time demands on political patrons to maintain an effective clientelist operation are not only for dyadic encounters with individuals in the constituency, they also include the time needed to lobby minister colleagues for clinic resources, make deals with private donors, meet with brokers, manage the clinic staff, respond to written requests (texts, e-mails and letters) and see clients in ministerial offices. It is, by all accounts, a full-time job for many representatives. Apart from using brokers, some politicians attempt to decrease the time demands, as well as the resource demands, by devising ways to avoid those constituents who expect to see them anywhere at any time.

The unwritten and unregulated functions of representatives as principal welfare agents and benefits facilitators further marginalise their constitutional roles as policy-makers, legislators and ministers. Apart from having less time to give to these roles, some formal public policy programmes lose precedence to the informal, immediate and short-term delivery of resources. Conversely, representatives' unwritten 'provider' roles enhance the opportunities that constituents have to negotiate resources from government. So entrenched is this informal role that a portion of the electorate believes that it directly elects 'ministers' and not representatives at general elections.<sup>429</sup> During the citizen interviews, representatives were often called 'ministers' even if they were not in cabinet. Additionally, most citizens interviewed had no real knowledge of the

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<sup>426</sup> Interview with Melvin Hulse Jr., Minister of Transport and Communication (UDP), 6 April 2011, Belmopan

<sup>427</sup> Interview with Saldivar.

<sup>428</sup> Interview with Marin.

<sup>429</sup> This has also been reported in *Katalyst* (2007) and the Political Reform Commission (2000).

constitutional legislative role of their area representatives, instead seeing them primarily as providers of personalised resources. This is not surprising given that clientelist relationships are facilitated by ministerial power and that politicians themselves increasingly conceive of elections as 'running for minister'. The cumulative effect of the post-independence expansion and entrenchment of the clientelist representative-constituent relationship is a rapid transformation of the concept and the practice of constituency representation, whether from the viewpoint of the politician or the citizen. From the viewpoint of a significant number of constituents, individual time with representatives or aspiring representatives is seen as an opportunity to influence the direction of specific resources in their favour.

As noted, most of the constituency-based community development activities provided by politicians operate out of party constituency offices, are poorly organised, funded by government resources and disappear as soon as the particular politician leaves the constituency. In several instances, buildings that housed educational activities and were constructed with public funds have ended up being owned by a party-based committee, and so they are not available for new area representatives. One of the very rare exceptions to this overall trend is the aforementioned Samuel Haynes Institute for Excellence (SHIE). Despite the fact that the area representative (Minister Wilfred Elrington) operates his weekly political clinic from the complex, the SHIE has received some positive reviews for the scope and professionalism of its community development and empowerment work. It is too early to assess how the SHIE will fare after the current area representative is no longer in the constituency and no longer has access to government funds for staff and other operations. However, its initial success highlights the question of what role area representatives should indeed play in the provision of community development opportunities for constituents.

This question was broached by a visiting Jamaican academic and journalist, Peta-Anne Baker, who found the work of the SHIE impressive. Conceding that there are risks related to its attachment to a partisan leader, Baker (2009: 1-3) suggested that, in the context of the failure of formal institutions to address



people's social and economic needs, the "question must not be whether, but how, the people's elected representative should contribute to the development process at the local level" in countries like Belize. Pointing to the "destructive strategies of patronage and clientelism" that dominate the politician/constituent relationship, she argued for a comprehensive re-think of the role of representatives, with the SHIE as a possible model. However, although the SHIE experience thus far suggests that a well-organised and well-funded community programme can, at least temporarily, operate side-by-side with clientelist operations, there is no evidence that the latter are decreasing. As such, the SHIE experience is still but a blip in the overall trend of clientelism as the dominant mode through which constituents engage with their representatives.

### ***'Paying' for Participation***

One clear consequence of entrenched political clientelism in Belize is the virtual disappearance of political party volunteerism. Up to the 1980s, constituency party operations were still largely based on volunteer labour from supporters who believed in their party. In the rampant phase of clientelism, the majority of party workers at every level expect and receive payment, either in direct cash transfers or in some other kind of resource, favour or privileged treatment. Paid brokers, party workers and campaigners have become the order of the day. This demise of party-based volunteerism, which was also linked to the lack of substantive differences between the PUP and the UDP, is yet another indicator that the size of a politician's cadre of workers is no longer a credible indicator of political support. Additionally, some politicians indicate that switching parties, even at election time, is now a regular occurrence among street campaigners, based on which politician or party can offer more benefits at any one time.

The expectation of monetary or some other form of compensation for political support now extends to the attendance at party events such as conventions, rallies, civil protests and even public consultations. One representative instance of the latter relates to the House Committee public consultations in 2011 on the UDP government's proposed constitutional amendments to give government guaranteed majority control of specific public utilities' shares. A local television station reported that "both the PUP and UDP are mobilizing their supporters to

swarm” the Belize City consultation.<sup>430</sup> In an interview with the station, the UDP representative for a Belize City constituency boasted that he would bring out 1,000 supporters. When pressed on whether people were being paid to attend or threatened with the withdrawal of patronage, the representative eventually conceded:

Those people remember the little house that they got. They remember the little help that they continue to get, including today. That's what they remember. The majority of people that are going out there in support of the [UDP] government and a lot of the people have gotten their 'deliverables'.<sup>431</sup>

Such scenarios have been playing out increasingly across the country since the 1990s. Those people who are in some way ‘compensated’ to attend such events are engaging in a form of informal participation, which brings them some benefit. At the same time, however, such exchanges cast a shadow over the credibility of certain events and processes. The distaste and partisan assumptions that can surround the ‘renting of crowds’ can even repel those who genuinely want to share their considered views. Indeed, the Belize case is replete with examples of how involvement in clientelist arrangements discourages other modes of participation due to fear that existing benefits may be lost. This effect is exacerbated by Belize’s highly personalised small-state politics, which allows for a high degree of compliance monitoring by politicians. This is to say that politicians can easily ‘keep an eye’ on constituents’ actions and remove, or threaten to remove, benefits if they conclude that clientelist bargains are being broken.

A rather blatant example relates to the actions in 2011 of ‘Boots’ Martinez, the UDP representative for a Belize City constituency.<sup>432</sup> The opposition PUP was holding an intra-party divisional convention to select the candidate who would be Martinez’s opponent. Martinez, then the Minister of Public Works, organised a group of his party workers to accompany him to a private yard located next to the PUP convention and directly in front of the queue of voters. Martinez and his group yelled insults and threats to voters, some by name, reminding them that benefits received can be taken away. Some constituents, upon seeing Martinez, decided against voting in the convention and left the line. When asked about the

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<sup>430</sup> Public Consultation or Political Rally. (2011, August 8). *7 News*

<sup>431</sup> Ibid.

<sup>432</sup> This episode was widely reported in the local press and also witnessed personally by the author.

incident by the media, Martinez defended his actions and even stated that his intention was to ensure that there was low voter turnout.<sup>433</sup> As a twist on Nichter's (2008: 19) term 'turnout buying', Martinez was practicing what can be denoted 'negative turnout buying.'

The Martinez episode—and the fact that there was indeed low turnout in the PUP convention—demonstrate how people can be intimidated from exercising a constitutional right. Stokes (2005: 315) coined the useful term “perverse accountability” to refer to “when [clientelist] parties influence how people vote by threatening to punish them for voting for another party.” However, it should be noted that the PUP aspirants in the Martinez case were also offering monetary and other incentives for getting out voters. As such, this case is an instructive example of how some voters can seek to maximize the value of their voting power by playing off competing politicians against each other. Rosberg, in his 2005 study of clientelism in development projects, captured this dynamic well:

[T]here is a frantic organisation and re-organisation of social alliances as individuals attempt to get as close as possible to those who are able to provide them with scarce and badly needed resources. If possible, they make direct alliances with patrons or their gatekeepers. If this is not possible, they ally themselves to others who have better access. They engage in competition with other factions to reserve coveted resources for themselves, but if the alternative faction appears sufficiently successful, they might choose to abandon their own alliance and associate with the competing faction (Rosberg, 2005: 133).

Apart from trying to determine who votes and for whom people vote, politicians also monitor citizens to gauge relative political support or opposition. In the Belize case, these actions include monitoring attendance at party rallies, positions taken on government actions, public statements to the media and involvement in independent advocacy campaigns. As a consequence, some citizens self-censor their activities so as to keep existing benefits or not jeopardise future benefits. The leader of the People's National Party (PNP), one of the tiny alternative parties, captured this effect well: “There is a decrease in speaking out, speaking your mind, resisting, advocating...because it may end up meaning you will not get a handout or that special favour. It muzzles people, especially in a small society.”<sup>434</sup> In short, clientelist politics discourages the non-

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<sup>433</sup> 'UDP Resorts to Intimidation', *Belize Times*, 24 March 2011.

<sup>434</sup> Interview with Wil Maheia, Leader of the People's National Party, 8 February 2011, Punta Gorda.

clientelist political participation of some Belizeans and, in the words of Stone (1980: 229), “inhibit[s] individual political freedom”. As such, even when people engage in independent advocacy activities, there is often suspicion (created by partisans) that such involvement is as a result of clientelist inducements.

### ***Locking Out Alternative Voices and Under-represented Groups***

The expansion and entrenchment of political clientelism also help to explain why alternative or independent politicians have failed so comprehensively to dent the electoral dominance of the PUP and UDP. The Leader of the PNP reflected on the challenges clientelism presented for his first election attempt in 2003:

I did not expect that there would have been such demand for handouts. The PNP had resolved not to play that game but actually to try to fight it, to change it. But I was amazed at the actual extent of it. Clearly the culture of handouts was long entrenched by the blue [PUP] and the red [UDP]. The message was ‘If you got nothing for me, write me off’.<sup>435</sup>

In the elections of 2008 and 2012, independent and third-party candidates together polled only 2.8 per cent (M. Palacio, 2011: 176) and 2.2 per cent (Elections and Boundaries Department, 2012: 1-6) of the vote, respectively. Candidates of smaller parties and independents who choose to participate, have either been unable to compete or have refused to compete with the established clientelist operations of the ‘big two’ parties. Indeed, several smaller parties, such as Vision Inspired by the People (VIP), have made their opposition to handout politics a part of their party platforms.<sup>436</sup>

Whereas some past and current politicians spoke of the demands and distaste of clientelist politics as necessary evils or normal activities in a young state, some potential politicians are deterred. One citizen, who himself decided against running as a third-party candidate, explained his thinking by saying, “New people wanting to become politicians these days have a huge challenge...how to deal with and overcome this handout culture. I can’t see how we can even begin without doing the same thing the two parties do. I can’t do that.”<sup>437</sup> Another former politician agreed, “Poor people cannot run for elections

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<sup>435</sup> Interview with Maheia.

<sup>436</sup> Interview with Paul Morgan, Co-Leader of the Vision Inspired by the People, 24 February 2011, Belmopan.

<sup>437</sup> Interview, name withheld on request.

now. It's too expensive because of the handout game...unless you have a 'padrino' who owns you. So it keeps out a lot of good people who want to run and makes contesting elections less egalitarian."<sup>438</sup>

There is also evidence that clientelism's disincentive effect on participation in electoral politics is one of the factors contributing to poor participation rates for women. Since 2008, Belize has had no women elected to parliament, placing it at the very bottom for this indicator of women's representation not only in all of the Commonwealth Caribbean but also worldwide (Roberts and Ibitoye, 2012: 33). Since independence women have made up only 5.6 per cent of all candidates seeking to become area representatives and only 2.9 per cent of all elected representatives (D. Lewis, 2012: 52). All the eight past and present female politicians interviewed for this study agreed that clientelist politics, albeit but one of several barriers, affects the electoral participation of women more than men, and two pinpointed the use of handout politics by their male opponents as an insurmountable advantage.<sup>439</sup> In her comprehensive situational analysis of gender and politics, Lewis pointed to similar findings:

It [handout politics] also makes it even more difficult to compete...women have fewer financial resources, less access to political donations, and less access to the powerful (and sometimes corrupt) networks that fuel political campaigns. Furthermore, there is some evidence that women have a greater distaste for feeding the system of handouts and patronage, while men more often see it as just part of the reality of political life. For all of these reasons, the ascent of a system of handout politics in Belize is one more barrier to women's political representation (2012: 44).

Although participation rates for women as party candidates in elections have been very low, several studies (Lewis, 2012; Catzim and Rosberg, 2001) have confirmed that women have higher rates of participation than men at most other (generally lower) levels of formal party activities (such as street campaigning, participation in rallies and general support work). Interestingly, this pattern has also been observed in the informal activities of clientelism: women are hardly ever patrons or brokers but make up the majority of the clientele. Low rates of female participation in the higher levels of the hierarchy of clientelist networks at the constituency level—one of the training 'grounds' for future political leaders—

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<sup>438</sup> Interview with Marin.

<sup>439</sup> Interviews with Haylock and Williams.

is therefore a critical cause of having fewer women as elected representatives in Belize's parliament.

***Implications for Informal Participation through Civil Society Organisations***

Not only have the activities of CSOs not dampened the expansion of clientelism, but there is also evidence that such expansion has itself made the work of CSOs significantly more challenging. As political clientelism has grown as a 'successful' mode of influencing the direction of resources to individuals, resource flows through CSOs are increasingly viewed as overly tedious to access. Experienced clients tend to view political clientelism as an easier and more predictable means of satisfying needs and wants. The 'street' rationale for this is reflected in the sentiments of a female caller to a radio programme broadcast, following Hurricane Richard, which struck the central Belize coast in October 2010. Complaining that the Red Cross was in her neighbourhood but asking too many questions and slowing things down, the caller appealed to her area representative to come "take care of business" (distributing the food and building materials) because the "Red Cross da all Indians and no chief."<sup>440</sup> However, the author's interviews with citizens also suggest that some do not view political patrons and CSOs as necessarily being 'either-or' alternatives. Some citizens engage simultaneously in multiple informal modes of participation as part of a rational means of maximising opportunities. This is the case, for example, with some members of CSOs in Belize City such as the Women's Circle. Several members attest to going to politicians for handouts, but they also seek out training and longer-term income generating activities through membership in CSOs.<sup>441</sup>

Furthermore, the Belize case suggests that entrenched political clientelism can complicate several aspects of the work of particular types of CSOs. Those that seek to build membership bases or to mobilise support around a cause can have a difficult time attracting people who have come to expect some short-term, personalised benefit from participation, or who do not want to risk losing existing benefits by publicly affiliating with a cause. With regard to the former, since the late 1990s CSOs have increasingly complained about the difficulty of

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<sup>440</sup> Citizen caller on 'Wake Up Da Mawnin, Krem Radio 29 October 2010, Belize City.

<sup>441</sup> Personal communication with Debra Lewis, member of the Women's Circle, March 2012, Belize City.

attracting volunteers.<sup>442</sup> This effect can be observed in two 2011 examples of civil society advocacy groups, which resorted to paying part-time workers to gather voter signatures for petitions aimed at triggering referenda on the issues of off-shore oil drilling and on the nationalisation of major utilities. In the case of the latter, the Friends of Belize,<sup>443</sup> which organised the petition on the nationalisation issue, admitted to paying \$2 per signature to collect 21,000 signatures.<sup>444</sup> Furthermore, when CSOs are successful in organising a particular advocacy activity, such as a protest march, there are often hushed accusations or speculations that one or other political party assisted them by bringing out supporters with financial and other inducements. This was the case, for example, in the large union-led protests against public corruption in 2004-2005.<sup>445</sup>

Additionally, when governments make and implement policy or programmatic decisions with a clientelist agenda, they can inadvertently complicate the programmes and behavioural-change messages of some CSOs. The housing loan and mortgage write-offs of \$77,000,000 in 2011 and 2012 provide an instructive example. In October 2011, five months before the 2012 election, the UDP government had written off 9,200 of what were described as non-performing loans valued at \$60,000,000.<sup>446</sup> Then in January 2012, less than two months before the 2012 election, the government wrote off another 780 mortgages (each under \$50,000) held by the Social Security Board and valued at \$17,000,000.<sup>447</sup> Not surprisingly, many of these loans had been originally distributed through clientelist networks of several different governments. The director of a CSO, Help for Progress, complained that such write-offs “give our clients bad habits...some think that our small loans are gifts too, and we have trouble collecting.”<sup>448</sup> The director of Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology (BEST), Belize’s largest loan-making CSO, provided a similar assessment:

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<sup>442</sup> Interview with Jones.

<sup>443</sup> It is well-known in Belize that Michael Ashcroft is a key force behind Friends of Belize.

<sup>444</sup> Friends of Belize Moves to Trigger Referendum. (2011, October 12). *7 News*.

<sup>445</sup> See, for example, Belizeans Revolt. (2005, March 13). *The Reporter*, p. 1.

<sup>446</sup> Senator Questions Loan Write-Offs. (2011, October 25). *Channel 5 News*. These loans had been acquired through various ‘special’ programmes of the Housing Department under both PUP and UDP governments.

<sup>447</sup> Government Writes Off Mortgages, Opposition Says Piñata Politics. (2012, February 13). *7 News*

<sup>448</sup> Interview with Elias Awe, Director Help for Progress, 1 March 2011, Belmopan.

BEST is experiencing the negative effects of the past actions of governments who gave loans as handouts, to not follow up on collecting loans and not taking those who don't pay to court. There are no repercussions. It's a culture now that a loan from government is a grant. This now extends to NGO projects. People don't expect to pay back. A huge part of the failure of [lending institutions] is this stupidity of not collecting or writing off loans for partisan purposes. Yes, there are always cases of true inability to pay, but these are lumped with the ones who sometimes can pay. It creates conflict and tensions too when some get away and some have to still pay. I oppose this write-off of \$60 million in non-performing housing loans. It will send the totally wrong message. But a big election is coming.<sup>449</sup>

However, CSOs can themselves contribute to the perception that they are not credible and effective alternative options for informal participation. As Jones stated, "quite a few CSOs depend on government support through subventions, exemptions, participation in internationally-funded projects and other favours. And some CSO leaders are lured away with better government jobs."<sup>450</sup> Indeed, there is some evidence to support Reid's (2008: 12) contention that CSOs can themselves become clients of the state or be seen as such. In a small society in which most social relations are dominated or influenced by political parties and personal politics, it is indeed challenging for CSOs to maintain their credibility as non-partisan actors.<sup>451</sup> Also, both PUP and UDP governments have been known to use discretionary powers such as those of providing public grants and tax-exemption status to CSOs to curry favour or to punish.<sup>452</sup> An example of the latter phenomena was the elimination of the annual financial government subvention to the Belize National Trade Union Congress (BNTUC) just shortly after the union co-led the 2004-2005 civil protests (Catzim, 2006a: 16-17).

Not surprisingly, politicians are among the most dubious in their views of the credibility of CSOs in relation to political clientelism. As a former PUP minister stated, "The social partners are not that much different from the people. At the same time they protest and complain about some policy or other, they come to politicians asking for [tax and duty] exemptions. It's hypocritical."<sup>453</sup> In a similar vein a former UDP prime minister observed that, "NGOs also began to act like the individual voters. They look out for what is good for 'my organisation', not

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<sup>449</sup> Interview with Jones.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> There have been instances in which political parties have actually contested board-of-director positions at the annual general meetings of CSOs (Vernon, 2001).

<sup>452</sup> Interview with Jones.

<sup>453</sup> Interview with Mark Espat.



the nation.”<sup>454</sup> Even though such views must be taken in balance with the findings of several studies (e.g., Byrd, 2003; Katalyst, 2007) that CSOs have had significant successes (in influencing public policy through advocacy and filling development gaps), the work of CSOs is made significantly more challenging by entrenched clientelism.

## **Consequences for Social Democracy**

### ***Informal and Politicised Social Welfare***

A core part of the argument of those who contend that political clientelism in the Belize context has positive outcomes relates to claims of distributive benefits. Most politicians interviewed believe that their clinic-based assistance activities promote the distribution or re-distribution of resources in a way that is beneficial for Belizeans, especially lower-income citizens. As such, it is an evolution of the pre-independence ‘helping the people’ justification. For example, PUP Leader Briceño defended his clinic work in these terms: “Poor people in need do benefit. When I see needs, like mothers with sick kids with my own eyes, I can’t ignore that.”<sup>455</sup> A UDP minister goes further: “Benefits politics is like a welfare system, and I know from experience that people get help. It is like a kind of [informal] conditional cash transfer programme. We may need to institutionalise it and bring it into the formal system. It works, and so giving more funds to representatives to use in their divisions will help more people.”<sup>456</sup> Even those politicians who believe that handout politics can have negative consequences for social welfare are quick to list the ways in which they have assisted needy constituents.

The Belize findings show that a growing number of poorer citizens barter their political support for needed goods and services—which may not have been otherwise available or accessible to them. That some Belizeans who are in need do derive some benefit from this exchange is not in dispute. Although some citizens interviewed for this study stated that they would prefer not to depend on handouts (or that these were inadequate) most agreed that people

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<sup>454</sup> Interview with Esquivel. Esquivel also suggested that even some churches attract members in poor communities through inducements of food and other support.

<sup>455</sup> Interview with John Briceño, Leader of the Opposition and former Deputy Prime Minister (PUP), 23 November 2010, Belize City.

<sup>456</sup> Interview with Saldivar.

do benefit. In a social context that is itself supportive of political clientelism, such responses are not surprising. Nor are they unique to Belize, as several studies on clientelism in poor Latin American communities demonstrate.<sup>457</sup> Indeed, in the words of George Price, there is “great social need.”<sup>458</sup> A poor single woman with six children and with only a part-time job, even if lucky enough to receive a weekly \$10 grant from the HSD, likely welcomes the assistance she can negotiate from her area representative—as a matter of need. Poor immigrant parents who receive fast-track nationality (and so can register to vote) can better negotiate for benefits, such as educational assistance for their children. As illustrated, a significant proportion of constituents justify bartering political support for needed resources with the argument that politicians are ‘thieving’ and that it is the public’s money anyway. From their point of view, the funds and resources received represent a sort of ‘informal tax return’ in the context of a broken and increasingly informal social welfare system. As such, clientelist relationships are seen to help fill social welfare voids created by the failure of public institutions to meet the most basic socio-economic needs. In this conceptualisation, political clientelism is for some an informal social welfare system; political clinics represent informal welfare entities; politicians are informal welfare agents; and constituents are welfare clients.

However, the recognition that some people do indeed benefit from such informal distribution comes with substantive caveats. First, although the majority of benefits are to meet immediate and short-term needs (such as the payment of utility bills, school fees and bus fares) not all clients are poor and some benefits are longer term in nature (such as land, houses, education and productive inputs). However, middle-class citizens who participate in clientelist relationships tend to request and receive more of these higher value resources. Thus, the ‘welfare’ argument becomes more dubious for this set of clients as their motivations to play the game of clientelism are not generally aligned with the goal of meeting basic needs. Nevertheless, middle-class and business-class

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<sup>457</sup> See, for example, Auyero (1999, 2000) for Argentina, Lazar (2004) for Bolivia and Gay (1994, 1999) for Brazil.

<sup>458</sup> Interview with Price.

clients generally point to a broken social system and an unlevel playing field as their motivations for playing the game.

Additionally, for those poorer citizens who do indeed benefit, there are serious questions about the implications of political clientelism for the social welfare system itself. Some politician and citizen interviewees pointed to the lack of fairness inherent in distributing resources through informal, clientelist operations. One politician captured the essence of the problem well: “The welfare system has been put into politicians’ hands. The safety-net has become more and more partisan and so more based on subjective decision-making. It is less merit-based, less fair.”<sup>459</sup> The reasoning and potential consequences here are quite evident. The direction and amount of benefits in the informal welfare system are based mostly on a politician’s individual assessment of past or potential political support and on the individual citizen’s ‘grassroots diplomacy’ skills. Without transparent guidelines and standards, how politicians make allocation decisions varies across constituencies, and indeed within constituencies. The result is indeed a skewed distribution process that is based less on merit and more on individual partisan assessments made by politicians. Some citizens, who do have needs but are less well connected and tenacious, often fall through the cracks. Those who are more politically connected or bold tend to get more. As illustrated, there are also growing numbers of ‘opportunistic’ clients who ‘play’ the politicians at their own clientelist game. These clients can easily double-dip or free-load in a game with such informal rules. Without adequate standards, accountability and evaluations for the distribution of benefits through political clinics, measuring the impact on people’s lives and ensuring fairness are difficult.

Even more worrisome is that the expansion of welfare distribution through clinic operations may not effectively contribute to solving deeply entrenched social and economic problems, as some politicians have contended. On the contrary, some problems may actually be exacerbated. Smith’s assessment here is on target: “The biggest downfall of handouts is that they promote short-term solutions to long-term problems. Much money is spent, but the problems

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<sup>459</sup> Interview with Roger Espejo, city councillor (UDP), 25 November 2010, Belize City.

remain. In the meantime, people grow to want short-term solutions at the expense of seeking real solutions.”<sup>460</sup> Jones agreed: “People are getting assistance, but it is not sustainable and not solving key problems. For instance, the school non-participation rate is increasing, the income gap is increasing and poverty is increasing.”<sup>461</sup> One problem that is certainly exacerbated by clientelist distribution, as demonstrated by the HSD case, is the weakening of the very public institutions that are supposed to address the effects of social problems such as poverty. Smith contended that, “Patronage politics have overturned government as the social provider...except perhaps in education.”<sup>462</sup> Even in education, an increasing percentage of the annual budget is allocated in a quota system for distribution on the recommendations of the 31 area representatives. What has transpired is akin to what Domínguez (1993: 13) termed “the corruption of the welfare state.” As Domínguez inferred (for the Commonwealth Caribbean), this ‘corruption’ can be seen as collateral damage in the process of perfecting the clientelist politics that both major political parties assumed was required for winning elections.

An interesting and broader question here is whether poverty, which was identified as a core supporting condition for the expansion of political clientelism, is not itself exacerbated by entrenched political clientelism. Stokes (2007: 618-619) noted how several studies point to at least three possible ways that political clientelism can cause poverty: parties in power deliberately keep people poor so as to perpetuate their dependence; clientelism encourages “declining relative productivity” and creates economic problems, which increase poverty; and clientelism contributes to poverty by providing short-term benefits to individuals at the expense of programmatic approaches. Although the first point has been an accusation occasionally made by conspiracy theorists, it assumes a level of long-term strategic thinking not in great supply in Belize’s major political parties. The second is plausible, if difficult to verify, and is addressed below in the sub-section on economic implications. The third point, although challenging to prove conclusively in a qualitative study, is also plausible. Even though poor individuals do benefit, the nature of clientelist

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<sup>460</sup> Interview with G. Smith,

<sup>461</sup> Interview with Jones.

<sup>462</sup> Interview with G. Smith.

politics means that what poorer people do receive are mostly 'band aid' solutions, that some people fall through the cracks, and that failing policies are perpetuated as longer-term and systemic solutions are postponed. It is another interesting area for further research.

### ***Waste of Public Finances and Loss of Revenue***

Since the 1990s, decisions and actions related to budgetary expenditure, revenue generation, public borrowing and the use of international grants have been increasingly influenced by the imperatives of keeping 'clientelist machineries' oiled and clients minimally satisfied. Due to the informal, illicit and/or underground nature of most clientelist activity, it is exceedingly difficult to calculate the proportion of public funds wasted and revenues lost due to clientelism. However, several clear links can be observed, especially with regard to the national budget. In relation to the expenditure side of the budget, the assessment of a retired politician hits the target: "The handout system is nothing but a form of irrational budget distribution because ministers now direct more and more of their ministries' budgets to their own constituencies at the expense of national programmes."<sup>463</sup> As illustrated, there has indeed been a trend toward increasing proportions of ministerial budgets being allocated through representatives and candidates of the ruling party, either under existing programmes or special projects. The circa 10 per cent of the education budget reserved for discretionary spending annually and the \$2,700,000 in special assistance funds granted for distribution by the UDP's 31 candidates before the 2012 elections are examples.

The example of the 'Venezuela money' offers particularly interesting insights into the multi-layered nature of the linkages of clientelism to waste. The fiscal situation in the lead-up to the 2008 election, when Belize received the \$40,000,000 from Venezuela, was fragile. Fiscal belt-tightening and budgetary strain, largely due to one-quarter of the budget having to go to external debt payments, meant that the PUP had almost zero flexibility to use domestic revenue or borrow more for pre-election 'piñata' projects and goodies. As demonstrated, only \$20,000,000 of the total Venezuela grant was made known initially, and the Musa government decided to expend this in a one-month

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<sup>463</sup> Interview with Hunter.

period before the election (Office of the Auditor General, 2009a: 5-7). As most of this money disappeared into the hands of politicians and voters, there were widespread allegations of election-buying and voter bribery. Although it may have been rational from the standpoint of PUP politicians seeking a third term in office, this hasty clientelist spending was decidedly irrational in terms of the stated primary intent of helping to address the problem of insufficient and inadequate housing. In this regard, the fiasco with the 'Venezuela money' also highlights another aspect of the waste problem: the ever present temptation to use such financial windfalls for handouts and not for development programmes.

Another example is the source of funds for the aforementioned special Christmas Assistance programme of 2011. Prime Minister Barrow revealed that the \$1,400,000 was a portion of the proceeds received by the UDP government in 2011 for shares held in newly nationalised Belize Telemedia Limited.<sup>464</sup> These seemingly sudden bouts of reckless spending are seldom without upstream or downstream links to other activities related to clientelism. In the case of the Venezuela grant, the PUP government had attempted to divert half of the \$40,000,000 to service a loan from Ashcroft's Belize Bank, without informing the House of Representatives—as it was legally mandated to do.<sup>465</sup> The background to the attempted diversion of these funds is revealing. The Belize Bank had taken over the loan in question from the Development Finance Corporation (DFC), which had carried a sovereign guarantee from the government. However, the original loan had been made to a PUP-favoured business group and was part of a huge 'loan for favours' scandal involving the DFC and the SSB that came to a head in 2004.<sup>466</sup> It is no secret that private donations, intended to influence such loan decisions, as well as portions of the loans themselves, can and do end up as kickbacks in party coffers, and by extension in political clinics. This is to say that it is highly likely that the motive to

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<sup>464</sup> SSB earns \$1 million in dividends, GOB \$13 mil, Central Bank \$0. (2012, January 12). *Amandala*.

<sup>465</sup> See further details on this story in, Belize Bank: A \$10m mystery, What connects the deputy-chairman of the Conservative Party with Hugo Chávez? (2008, May 15). *Economist*. Retrieved from <http://www.economist.com/node/11377008/print>.

<sup>466</sup> This public scandal involved both the SSB and the DFC and was the subject of two public investigations and reports: the Report of the Senate Select Committee Investigating the Social Security Board (Senate Select Committee, 2008), and the Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Development Finance Corporation (Price, Lord, and Martinez, 2008). Public outrage and protests were factors in the PUP's defeat in the 2008 election.

find funds for pre-election clinic operations in 2003 played at least some role in the complicated and wasteful loan fiasco.<sup>467</sup>

Cumulatively, such fiscal decisions influenced by clientelism contribute to a waste of public funds. The waste occurs on several levels, not the least of which is spending significant sums of money without advancing solutions to social and economic problems. Comparing the costs of some examples of clientelist spending to the budgets of some ministries throws light on the dimension of the problem. The nearly \$20,000,000 of the 'Venezuela money' expended in the four-week period before the 2008 election was more than the total annual budgets of all but eight of the then 13 ministries of government in 2007-2008 (Ministry of Finance, 2007: 549). In Chapter 2, it was estimated that (assuming that 55 constituency clinics are operational) the total annual expenditures for clinic operations in a non-election year can be as high as \$9,900,000. This is more than the total annual budgets of 10 of the then 19 ministries in 2010-2011 (Ministry of Finance, 2010: 27), including the ministries with responsibilities for human development, housing, economic development, public works and local government. The \$2,700,000 expended in the special assistance programmes leading up to the 2012 election was more than the annual budget of two ministries (Housing and Attorney-General), and one-third of the entire budget of the Ministry of Human Development (Ministry of Finance, 2011: 27).

On the public revenue side, some of the losses are associated with incumbent politicians giving individual citizens financial waivers for which they may not otherwise be eligible. For example, when the UDP government decided to write off the mortgages of 10,000 individuals worth a total of \$77,000,000 in a five-month period before a national election, not only was it depriving the treasury of needed income, but it was also sending out a message to other mortgage holders and loan applicants that repayment will not necessarily be taken seriously. Similarly, the use of ministerial power to waive or lower import duties and fees for specified persons has contributed to the overall revenue collection problem.

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<sup>467</sup> The Belize Bank has taken the Government of Belize to court to try to recover the original loan that was guaranteed by the PUP government. This has resulted in further waste of money for legal fees and of time.

However, most of the loss of revenue related to clientelism is a result of the favours bought or given to the business sector, not to the poor or most of the middle class. It is the local and international businesses that most reap the benefits in terms of lack of loan repayment by bigger debtors, investment concessions, fee waivers, bloated contracts and other special treatment afforded donors by politicians and political parties. A former politician made the links very well:

For every dollar they give [to politicians], the donors can get back double, ten, up to a hundred times what was invested. And this indirectly means that government revenue is less and there is less money for the state to meet peoples' needs. Much of the non-payment of these loans, the lucrative concessions, the problems you saw at SSB and DFC that cost the state revenue can all be traced back to that dollar invested. Part of that dollar is to oil the wheels of patronage. If we include all such big and not so big party donors, the effect is less revenue for public coffers and for social spending.<sup>468</sup>

Although acknowledging the revenue-depleting effects, not all politicians assess 'return on investments' as having an overall negative outcome. Such minority arguments are captured well by Smith:

I do not see so huge a problem with the 'return on investment' issue. Remember that the private sector is the engine of growth and tax holidays and duty-free concessions assist this. For example, investments in shrimp and the tourism village have been made by campaign donors who did get breaks, but these all added to economic activity and economic growth. If there is less money for the government budget, this is counter-balanced by the positive economic repercussions of major investments.<sup>469</sup>

This is indeed the point of view also held by Ralph Fonseca. He argued that the concessions given to businesses, which may have contributed to the party, have more benefits (such as transferring technology and boosting the economy) than costs, and that these are a "necessary part of the risks of doing business."<sup>470</sup> For the PUP Leader it is a matter of degree: "The return on investment aspect can be a problem but does not have to be. I have no apologies for helping someone who helped my party to get a contract, but I do not condone that the contract is double the price. There is a line that should not be crossed."<sup>471</sup> Across the partisan fence, Prime Minister Barrow made this very same point.<sup>472</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> Interview with Jose Coye, former minister (PUP), 11 November 2010, Belize City.

<sup>469</sup> Interview with G. Smith.

<sup>470</sup> Interview with R. Fonseca.

<sup>471</sup> Interview with Briceño.

<sup>472</sup> Interview with Barrow.



As challenging as it is to estimate revenue lost due to clientelist businesses relationships, there is some evidence that losses outweigh benefits. For example, Bulmer-Thomas and Bulmer-Thomas (2012: 165) argued that fiscal concessions contribute to Belize being 'under-taxed'. Their analysis of 2005 figures indicated that public revenue was nearly 30 per cent (\$140,000,000) below what could have been expected and that this was double the entire education budget.<sup>473</sup> They particularly cited Ashcroft's business concessions as examples of revenue lost. A former chair of the board of Belize Trade and Investment Development Service Promotion (BELTRAIDE), which is responsible for granting duty concessions for business promotion, confirmed that there was always constant pressure from politicians to influence the board's decisions and that there is resistance from political leadership to increase the transparency of the process.<sup>474</sup> He agreed that potential revenue is lost due to concessions that do not meet the standards set and that there is minimal follow-up by BELTRAIDE to assess whether the promised jobs and economic benefits are indeed created.

### ***Serious Challenges for Public Policy***

A comprehensive study of the policy-making process (i.e., identifying, formulating, approving and implementing public policies) in Belize by Katalyst (2007: 166-167) found it to be top-down in approach, lacking in inter-ministerial coordination, not guided by national development goals and hampered by weak implementation and monitoring practices. The study (2007: 164) concluded that this results in public policies that are largely "reactive, incremental, ad hoc and short-term." Although the study pinpointed the two-party adversarial system, and election timetables and financing as key causes, it only alluded to the impact of clientelist politics. There is indeed a very direct link.

Because informal resource distribution often has superseded the formal functions of government, public institutions have faced added constraints in developing and implementing the policies needed to mitigate social ills. Stokes

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<sup>473</sup> Bulmer-Thomas and Bulmer Thomas (2012: 144-145) also illustrated that Gross National Income (GNI) (which adjusts GNP to include income received and paid abroad) has decreased as a ratio of GDP in the 30 years since independence to over 10 per cent in 2010—meaning that over 10 per cent of GDP does not accrue to Belizeans. The authors refer to this as the 'Ashcroft effect'.

<sup>474</sup> Interview with Sharp.

made the links well: “Rather than using public policy to effect transfers from some classes of voters to others, parties deliver inducements to individual voters and thus bolster the parties’ electoral prospects” (2007: 611). Several examples have been given that illustrate the impact of clientelism on policy implementation in such ministries as education, health, housing and human development. The HSD case clearly showed on-going interference and damage to social welfare policy implementation. In an attempt to influence individual voters before the 2008 election, a significant portion of the first tranche of the Venezuela funds was allocated outside of established policy guidelines and procedures. New policy initiatives of 2010-2012, such as the CCT programme, struggle to escape the clientelist embrace. When some area representatives failed to get the CCT funds to pass ‘through’ them, they still understood that they could seek to influence recipients by sending recommendations and lists of names to the Ministry of Human Development.<sup>475</sup> The central point here is that policy implementation is often adversely affected when politicians succeed in influencing decisions on the allocation of public resources to favour constituents or to recruit new clients.

However, the more damaging impact of entrenched clientelism on the policy-making process lies in the on-going (and growing) costs of financing the clientelist operations of politicians. As illustrated, such costs are now year-round and the biggest portion of the financing needs of politicians. Two of the inter-related negative implications for the policy process are the promotion of short-term and individually-targeted approaches to problem solving, and the concurrent lack of incentives for long-term planning for national programmes. Politicians interviewed were generally open in their acknowledgement that political clientelism encourages quick or ineffective policy approaches to societal problems:

One of the biggest downfalls of this kind of politics is that it promotes short-term solutions without really fixing the problems. Over time people grow to want immediate solutions to their current problems.<sup>476</sup>

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<sup>475</sup> The Cabinet eventually decided that the CCT scheme would be managed by the Ministry of Human Development and not by representatives (Interview with Contreras). This was related to the need to prove to potential international funders that the programme is transparent. Overall, it is too early to assess the extent to which the Belize CCT programme has been able to maintain a fire wall from clientelist politics.

<sup>476</sup> Interview with G. Smith.

It's a vicious cycle. The party winning, and not the country, becomes the most important thing. The key is to get goods and services to the people in the short term and more and more this becomes the norm. It's hard to stop and if you want to win.<sup>477</sup>

It [political clientelism] is a disincentive to long-term planning...and even for divisional and community planning. Ministers and area representatives focus less and less on collective and national development and more on needs of individual constituents. But this is also true for voters who want individual needs met and have decreasing interest in national programmes...these count for less in deciding who to support.<sup>478</sup>

There were also comments from politicians about constituents having waning interest in community goods and projects. A Belize City politician expressed frustration that the library, roads, sports field and park she had organised to build were but “minimally appreciated” by the type of constituents who were looking out for personal handouts.<sup>479</sup> Another added, “Some people can't see beyond their mouths and there is less interest in community projects that affect everyone. They [the people] say that those kinds of projects are OK but they don't put food on my table.”<sup>480</sup> Prime Minister Barrow used a Kriol proverb to make the same point: “While di grass di grow, di horse di starve”—meaning in the time it takes to reform public institutions people still need help.<sup>481</sup>

However, a handful of politicians interviewed objected to the view that constituents are disinterested in collective projects. They contended that those politicians who have this experience either use “overly paternalistic approaches”<sup>482</sup> or “take the easy road and go directly to only handouts.”<sup>483</sup> The co-founder of the relatively successful SHIE, agreed: “It is not my experience that community-wide programmes have to be negatively affected. It is the calibre of the politician that matters. If you are a man of straw you will give in and be consumed fully by handout politics.”<sup>484</sup> Nevertheless, the Belize case has illustrated that, since the 1998 election, the vast majority of politicians have indeed opted to take the easy road.

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<sup>477</sup> Interview with F. Fonseca.

<sup>478</sup> Interview with Esquivel.

<sup>479</sup> Interview with Balderamos-Garcia.

<sup>480</sup> Interview with Hulse Jr.

<sup>481</sup> Interview with Barrow.

<sup>482</sup> Interview with Briceño.

<sup>483</sup> Interview with Mark Espat.

<sup>484</sup> Interview with Wilfred Elrington, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (UDP), 30 November 2010, Belmopan.

On the whole, this discussion suggests that clientelist politics is a significant contributing factor to the 'anti-planning trend' identified by Katalyst (2007: 164). It illustrated that most macro-planning is externally-driven and that there has been decreasing interest in national development planning since independence. In relation to the latter, the Katalyst study found that since the 1990s, governments have routinely ignored or given only lip service to long-term development plans and that the manifestos of the PUP and UDP have filled the vacuum created.<sup>485</sup> Numerous studies have emphasised that this lack of long-term national development planning is detrimental to the nation's development. For example, a UNDP country assessment stated that "because there is no overall national development plan and corresponding centralised coordination strategy, individual planning efforts remain uncoordinated and non-strategic, thereby not systematically taking advantage of synergies and collective efforts" (United Nations Development Programme, 2006: 183).

In 2007, after pressure from international organisations and local CSOs, a process to develop a 25-year national development plan termed Vision 2025 was finally launched under the 2003-2008 PUP government. It was renamed Horizon 2030 and completed in 2011, following nationwide consultations under the 2008-2012 UDP government (Government of Belize, 2011). However, this impressive and comprehensive plan was only approved by Cabinet after the 2012 election. A key player in the plan development process has suggested that the overall cool reception of Horizon 2030 at senior levels of political leadership is an example of the extent to which politicians focus on meeting immediate individual needs and are unmotivated to seek longer-term collective solutions: "Politicians have short-term visions to the next election or even the next clinic day. There is little political interest at government level or in the opposition...just some rhetorical support. It does not bode well for the plan."<sup>486</sup>

Overall, entrenched clientelism represents a triple assault on long-term policy and collective development approaches: first, from political parties, which have

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<sup>485</sup> Between 1990 and 2000, there were two attempts to develop five-year development plans and one to develop a longer-term plan. One of the five-year development plans was never completed and the other was mostly ignored. Even after a well-funded national consultation process between 1993 and 1994, the longer-term plan (the National Human Development Agenda) was never completed (Katalyst, 2007: 99-100).

<sup>486</sup> Interview with Barnett.

little incentive to offer distinctive national visions and policies to the electorate; second, from politicians who seek to deliver more targeted goods and services directly to individuals and households; and third, from growing numbers of citizens who demand immediate and individual delivery of benefits.

### ***Increasing the Influence of Private Donors***

As illustrated, politicians receive a significant amount of their funds for campaigning and clinic operations, and especially for direct cash transfers to clients, from private sources. Citizens are generally well aware of this fact. A SPEAR poll (2005: 8) indicated that 33.3 per cent of respondents believed that political parties get money to finance their campaigns from 'big business'; 24.5 per cent said 'the government budget'; 18.1 per cent said 'illegal sources'; and 12.1 per cent said 'special interest groups'. The relationship between these donations and public policy is self-evident. Generally, influence on the policy-making process is directly related to who succeeds in exerting most influence on senior policy makers such as the prime minister, the minister of finance, other ministers of cabinet, representatives and senior public officers. Most politicians do not deny the high level of influence that donors have on the policy process, and view the policy-related favours or/and advantages given to donors as just 'returns on investments'. As Katalyst (2007: 130) found, the business sector is the best organised of the non-state actors, and business donors wield high levels of influence related to their ability to dispense large amounts of resources quickly. Several examples can illustrate the spaghetti-like linkages between clientelist politics and the policy influence of financial contributors. Some of the better-known examples relate to two of the wealthiest businessmen and biggest donors to political parties since the early 1990s.

Sir Barry Bowen (deceased), who was reputed to be one of Belize's most wealthy nationals, owned a multi-company business empire (the Bowen Group), that at one time or another, included ownership or major interests in the monopoly beer industry, shipping, automobile sales, the Coca Cola franchise and bottled water, coffee production, a major resort hotel and aqua-farming, among others. His business interests are now managed by his sons. Donations from Bowen to both major political parties and individual politicians since 1981

are estimated to have been in the millions.<sup>487</sup> In one instance of policy influence, in 1993 Bowen proposed a significant reduction of the tax on his locally produced beer, which was eventually granted.<sup>488</sup> A member of the then cabinet, who had lobbied for the tax reduction to be passed on to consumers, was informed at the time, that it was a “quid pro quo for another business investment Bowen was going to make in milk production”.<sup>489</sup> Cabinet agreed to the tax cut (with Bowen’s beer prices remaining the same), and the government promised lavish investment concession deals for this latter venture.<sup>490</sup>

In another instance, when Bowen wanted to make major investments in the shrimp farming industry in 2007, he coordinated a group of shrimp farmers to pen their own draft legislation and then to lobby the government for enactment. The bill contained favourable business concessions for the investors.<sup>491</sup> A minister of cabinet revealed that he opposed the legislation because it would result in a net revenue loss for the government, but he was in the minority.<sup>492</sup> He informed that he was admonished by a fellow cabinet colleague to “get real...there is an election coming...the party needs the money.”<sup>493</sup> The bill was eventually enacted and became the Aquaculture Development Act.

The second example brings the focus back on Ashcroft. As Gibson and Palacio (2011: 20) stated, “The influence on the political parties and governments of Belize by the British billionaire Lord Michael Ashcroft, former [Deputy] Chairman of the British Conservative Party, has been inordinate.” The instances of policy influence related to Ashcroft’s donations of tens of millions of dollars to both the PUP and UDP over the past 25 years are many, and several have been referenced already. The draft of the International Business Companies Act, which exempted Ashcroft’s companies from various taxes for 30 years, was prepared by Ashcroft’s lawyers in 1990. Ashcroft’s companies have either drafted, or heavily influenced the drafting or amending of, several other pieces of legislation including the Off-shore Banking Act and the Telecommunications

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<sup>487</sup> This is based on information from several interviews with politicians.

<sup>488</sup> Sick Government (Editorial). (1996, October 13). *Belize Times*.

<sup>489</sup> Interview with Coye.

<sup>490</sup> The milk factory was never constructed due to ‘complications’ created by a change of government in 1993.

<sup>491</sup> Interview with Mark Espat.

<sup>492</sup> Ibid.

<sup>493</sup> Ibid.

Act. In regard to telecommunications, and after negotiating a sweetheart deal with the government in 1992 to purchase a majority share in the then Belize Telecommunication Limited (BTL), Ashcroft was also able to secure additional tax benefits, such as a controversial tax accommodation agreement granted by the PUP government of 2003-2008. This guaranteed Ashcroft's telecommunication company 15 per cent minimum profits before business taxes were triggered.<sup>494</sup> It was largely such influence on policy decisions 'bought' by Ashcroft that led Bulmer-Thomas and Bulmer-Thomas (2012: 166) to conclude that, "No single person has been more assiduous in fighting for the fiscal concessions that have contributed to the failures of the growth model as well as leading to an oligopolistic banking system."<sup>495</sup>

In addition to the handful of mega donors like Ashcroft and the Bowen Group, there are tens of other big donors<sup>496</sup> and hundreds of smaller ones who help to bankroll clientelism and gain some influence over development and the implementation of particular policies. The argument here is not that the policy influence of such donors would be non-existent without clientelism, but that the demand for funds for clientelist operations is a major and underestimated factor in influencing the entire policy-making and legislative process. This is especially the case for any governance reforms that threaten the clientelist game.

### ***Disincentive for Governance Reform***

Goetz's (2007: 406) argument about the implications of clientelism for governance reform finds fertile political ground in Belize:

The central dilemma that governance reforms pose to politicians inheres in their perceived high cost in terms of lost patronage resources, lost opportunities for private earnings, and an erosion of political support from public sector workers. Administrative reforms in particular decrease the ability of politicians to build political capital through the distribution of public sector appointments and jobs, or through the awarding of contracts.

Governance reform initiatives that seek to place limits on the discretionary allocation of public resources are among those that face the most resistance from Belizean governments. A review of government responses to the 103 recommendations of the PRC reveals that the highest levels of resistance and non-enactment relate to those measures that would diminish existing powers to

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<sup>494</sup> Lord Ashcroft of Belize facing eviction as country turns on him. (2009, November 1). *The Observer*. London.

<sup>495</sup> The Belize Bank now controls 40 per cent of all financing in the banking system (Barrow, 2012).

<sup>496</sup> Interview with G. Smith.

decide on targeted allocations and increase accountability around such allocations (Katalyst, 2007: 155-156). For example, among those PRC's recommendations not implemented were two that sought to limit the arbitrary abuse of powers of ministers to waive fees and to regulate campaign financing—activities at the heart of clientelist politics.

Since the 1993 election, both the PUP and UDP have repeatedly broken manifesto promises to develop and enact campaign financing legislation, notwithstanding on-going advocacy in this regard by several CSOs. The 2006 SPEAR poll indicated significant public support for regulating campaign financing, with an overwhelming majority of 81.4 per cent saying that they would support a law requiring political parties to disclose their sources of campaign financing. In its 2003-2008 term of office, elements of the PUP government actually drafted a campaign finance law, but it was squashed in Cabinet.<sup>497</sup> This bipartisan reluctance to regulate campaign financing, much less political parties, points to the absence of incentives to enact legislative changes that may inhibit unregulated competition for private financing for campaigns and clientelist operations.

Similarly, recommendations from various public service reform commissions to fix the 'open-vote worker' problem and give the election management body more independence have been ignored by both parties.<sup>498</sup> As noted, the practice of abusing the 'open-vote' option is attacked repeatedly by parties when in opposition, especially after huge staff turnovers in the public service when governments change. However, despite repeated promises neither party has taken measures to address the issue through reform when in power. Indeed, there is a growing sense that these post-election changes are such a normal part of political life as to be difficult to mitigate. The same is true for reforms related to the election management machinery. As noted, amendments to the Representation of the People's Act diluted the autonomy of the EBC by giving the party in power majority control and by transferring some EBC responsibilities to a government department. Both major parties have refused to

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<sup>497</sup> Interview with F. Fonseca.

<sup>498</sup> These include recommendations in the reports of the PRC (2000), the Management Audit (2004) and the Public Sector Reform Council (2000).



respond to numerous recommendations to increase EBC independence. These include the recommendations of the PRC (2000: 117-118) to remove majority control from political parties, transfer the power to appoint the chief elections officer from the prime minister to a reformed EBC and give the reformed EBC priority budgetary treatment. In 2000, the governing PUP accepted the PRC's recommendations on this matter, but did not act to implement reforms. Similarly, in 2012 the UDP government announced that, due to lack of finances, it would not proceed with the legally-mandated process of re-registering voters—which would clean up the voters' lists.<sup>499</sup> It is clearly not in the interest of either party to have a more independent election management body with the authority and resources required to perform effectively such duties as re-registration and investigating allegations of voter bribery.<sup>500</sup>

### ***Public Corruption and Corruption of the Public***

The growth of public corruption in Belize since the late 1990s is well-established. Belize's rapid fall from 46 in 2003 to 109 in 2008 on the CPI places Belize in the category of states with 'rampant corruption' on Transparency International's scale.<sup>501</sup> A spate of national reports and studies has pinpointed political corruption as one of the most challenging governance and development issues facing Belize, and it has been a dominant campaign issue of parties in opposition in almost every election since independence. A SPEAR poll (2006: 7) found that corruption was ranked as the national issue of highest concern, and even ahead of poverty. However, a 2010 AmericasBarometer survey (Bell, 2012: 1-2) found that only 36 per cent of Belizeans believed that the government confronts corruption. The same survey suggested that this high level of concern about a poor record of fighting corruption helps to explain why 58 per cent of Belizeans would support a more authoritarian government—more than any of all the 23 regional countries surveyed.<sup>502</sup>

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<sup>499</sup> Re-registration Pushed Back Another Five Years. (2012 June 29). *7 News*. One of the biggest problems with the voters' list is that a significant number of voters do not reside in the constituencies they vote in. As noted, some voters are 'compensated' for this.

<sup>500</sup> Interview with Bradley.

<sup>501</sup> <http://www.transparency.org/>.

<sup>502</sup> The survey report on this question also suggested that countries that had high levels of corruption, but also had traumatic national experiences with military dictatorships, tended to have less support for authoritarianism.

This increase in political corruption has occurred in the same post-1990 period of rampant clientelism in Belize, and there is a direct relationship. As Hutchcroft (1997: 645) contended, political clientelism overlaps with public corruption when patrons use public office or access to office holders to extract favours related to state resources and services. Rehren (2009: 50) further clarified the link: “When political parties control the bureaucracy and behave as virtual patrons, dispensing public resources and positions in exchange for partisan allegiance, and eventually allow party members to enrich themselves, clientelism facilitates corruption.” As such, the corrupting influence of clientelism can be linked to the relationships and opportunities created by the flow of resources needed to oil the wheels of clientelism. In the Belize political context, characterised by high levels of allocation of public funds through politicians to citizens and a lack of regulation of political parties and campaign financing, political clientelism has contributed directly to political corruption.

Dyadic clientelist exchanges between politicians and citizens, when they involve public goods, can be construed as private gain for both politicians and clients. Politicians gain votes to access or keep political power, and clients gain a wide variety of individualised benefits such as jobs, land or social assistance. The opportunity for abusing public funds inherent in these dyadic exchanges is, no doubt, a core part of why voter bribery is an illegal and indictable offence. Although there have been hundreds of allegations of political corruption in Belize, there have only been a handful of corruption-related court cases and no politician has ever been fined or imprisoned as a result.

George Price, when asked to reflect on the ‘new’ post-1990s implications of political clientelism, maintained the ‘helping’ justification, but also added a concern that no other politician interviewed mentioned: “It is a good thing that they [politicians] do. The problem is with those who get the money and keep some for themselves or their circle. They don’t give it to the people.”<sup>503</sup> Indeed, the opportunities for public funds to be siphoned off and to disappear into the black hole of clientelism abound, and a few illustrations make the point. For example, there is absolutely no reporting done for the constituency stipend that

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<sup>503</sup> Interview with Price.

goes directly to area representatives.<sup>504</sup> As noted, politicians confirm that this is the 'anchor money' for their clinic operations. Attempts by the Auditor General in 2011 to begin to follow the money trail of these funds were rebuffed by the Ministry of Finance.<sup>505</sup> Consequently, there is no way to confirm how the money is spent and which individual constituents receive funds. The same problems with accountability afflict most of the short-term special assistance programmes that pass through the clinic operations of area representatives and party candidates. For instance, it is highly likely that much of the \$7,000,000 from the Venezuelan grant that was deemed 'unaccounted' by the Auditor General (Office of the Auditor General, 2009a: 25), ended up in private hands. Even in those cases when there is some paper trail, corruption can be present. For example, the audit investigation into the 2003 education scandal found clear evidence that scholarship grants were being transferred to non-students.<sup>506</sup> In short, the characteristic lack of formality and rules governing clientelist operations present many opportunities for private gain from public money by politicians, brokers, party operatives and clients.

Another set of linkages point to corruption related to private donations for clientelist operations, which can also lead to private gain for both politicians and donors. The gain transpires when funds donated lead to extra 'returns on investment' for the donors through the universal means of tax write-offs, duty-free concessions, discretionary fee waivers, bloated contracts, favourable legislation and the like. The aggregate corruption impact over time of hundreds of donors getting some special favour from government is incalculable. In the case of Ashcroft, for example, the 'returns on investments' for financing both major political parties since the early 1990s have included his appointment as Belize's Representative to the United Nations, the purchase of majority shares in the telecommunications monopoly, the drafting of legislation and numerous concessions for his various businesses.

The Belize case also illustrates that clientelism plays a significant role in promoting the acceptance of corruption among the wider public. Because of the

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<sup>504</sup> Personal Communication with Alvarez.

<sup>505</sup> Interview with Edmund Zuniga, Auditor General of Belize, 24 February 2011, Belmopan.

<sup>506</sup> 'UDP Accuses Education Officials of Scandal', *Channel 5 News*, 18 February 2003.

common excuse given by politicians that such transfers ‘help’ people, these links to corruption are sometimes justified, overlooked or ignored. As illustrated, voters are generally aware that the clientelist game is being played and have little genuine respect for their politician patrons. Many know (or believe) that their politicians are corrupt and enriching themselves, and they use this as an excuse for playing the game themselves. As the clientelist game grew and became the norm, some people began to excuse or justify the corruption of their politicians and even to see it as normal. As Hyde (2006: 5) noted, when “people do not ask where the money for handouts comes from” they become “part of the whole process which involves dirty money and corruption.” This pattern of supporting or tolerating corrupt politicians or governments has been well-documented in other nations. For example, in a cross-national study on public support for corrupt leaders, Manzetti and Wilson (2009: 77-78) found that, “People in countries where government institutions are weak and patron-client relations are strong are more likely to support a corrupt leader from whom they expect to receive tangible benefits.” They observed that such public support is more likely in states that exhibit higher levels of poverty and inequality. This description aptly applies to the Belize case in particular electoral constituencies.

### ***Political Culture: Horse or Carriage?***

This discussion of the linkages between corruption and clientelism raises the question of how political clientelism has shaped the political culture of Belizeans. The analysis thus far strongly suggests that political clientelism has not only changed Belizean political culture, but is indeed now a defining feature of it. One political observer made the sobering but accurate observation that “the average 18 year old Belizean who has just become a voter may know little else about the political process other than selling votes for a favour. It is what they know and what they use.”<sup>507</sup> The author’s interviews with younger citizens and students, including a focus group with 32 students at the University of Belize, confirm that there is indeed a high level of awareness of the clientelist game. In particular, several interviewees pointed to the fact that their parents or guardians had to visit constituency representatives so as to get their children on lists for educational assistance. In short, many young potential voters have

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<sup>507</sup> Interview with Courtenay.

been politically socialised with the clientelist aspect of Belize's political culture by parents, politicians and the media.

Apart from the number of people who participate in some way in clientelist relationships, widespread acceptance of political clientelism as a political-culture norm is reflected in the open way in which constituents attend political clinics, in the blatant disregard of laws prohibiting voter bribery and in the normality with which it is treated by most of the media and much of the public. A key indicator of the latter is the extent to which there is now 'publicly negotiated clientelism' between individual citizens and politicians via the numerous live call-in talk shows. In relation to voter bribery, although allegations have skyrocketed, only one case (Hegar vs. Contreras, 1998) was brought before the courts between 1981 and 2011. As before independence, this case was thrown out on technicalities before it was fully heard. These 30-plus years of the total absence of legal consequences add to the 'it's just part of our culture' justification. This thinking is evident in Smith's (2007: 3) argument on the hard challenge of regulating campaign financing and addressing vote buying in Belize:

At a minimum, Belize should be wary of importing regulations designed for countries that do not manifest the socio-cultural peculiarities—and realities—of Belize. A respected judge in the Caribbean once opined that vote buying was part of Caribbean culture and that therefore it could not effectively be outlawed.

This widespread acceptance of political clientelism as 'cultural' exacerbates several existing negative aspects of Belizean political culture itself. Paraphrasing Gibson and Palacio (2011: 21), entrenched clientelism has made the "societal moral/legal divide" even more grey and nebulous, and attitudes "towards high risk" and "illicit activity" more nonchalant. As explored above, it has had a noticeable impact on promoting a culture of corruption. It has also encouraged the individualism of the 'me culture' at the expense of community approaches to political participation and development. As one CSO leader observed, "Handouts decrease the amount that people care about the community...instead, people care more about themselves."<sup>508</sup> The leader of the PNP went further: "You can't hold people's attention with real national issues.

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<sup>508</sup> Interview with Armando Chocó, director, Toledo Cacao Growers Association, 15 February 2011, Punta Gorda.

All they think about are handouts. It is damaging their minds.”<sup>509</sup> A view held by a majority of the politicians interviewed, and some citizens as well, is that political clientelism has promoted a culture of paternalism and ‘demigodism’ among leaders, and dependency, laziness, and the need for immediate gratification among constituents. As noted, however, some unemployed citizens interviewed claimed that if jobs were available, these would be preferred to handouts. Another possible question for further research is if, and to what extent, clientelism acts as a disincentive to productivity, as is the case, for example, with remittances from emigrants in some contexts.<sup>510</sup> What is clear is that there is an identifiable behaviour of mutual dependency between politicians and some citizens, in which handouts are being increasingly perceived as bribes and entitlements.

### ***Linkages to Conflict, Violence and Drugs?***

Although Belize’s version of clientelist politics has not been directly linked to political division and violence, there are some indications that this could change. Moberg (1991) demonstrated how the expansion of party-based clientelism in rural Belize in the 1980s contributed to village factionalism, and sometimes petty violence, over the distribution of spoils, to the detriment of community initiatives for development. More recently and especially over the past decade, Belize has certainly witnessed a significant increase in overall violent criminal activity. For example, Belize’s homicide rate increased from 30 to 44 per 100,000 between 2002 and 2012, when it ranked sixth highest in the world, third in Central America and second in the Commonwealth Caribbean (López, 2013: 2-3). Some have linked aspects of this violence to the drug trade. Belize, like its neighbours, has been a transshipment point for drugs (largely cocaine since the 1990s) going from South America to North America, and traffickers are also located in Belize<sup>511</sup> (López, 2013; United States Department of State, 2012:

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<sup>509</sup> Interview with Maheia.

<sup>510</sup> The ‘remittance’ argument has been raised in a few studies on Belize, including Vernon (1990). In relation to political clientelism, for example, Clapham (1982) suggested the transfer of clientelist inducements is a disincentive to productivity because a portion of clients have less need to engage in self-employment and/or seek jobs.

<sup>511</sup> The U.S. Department of State added Belize to its ‘Majors List’ for drug transit for the first time in 2012 and pointed to increasing concerns about the spread of money laundering activity. The report estimated that 10 metric tons of drugs pass through Belize annually for the United States and expressed concerns related to the infiltration into Belize of major drug trafficking organisations (including Los Zetas of México) and to the involvement of Belize’s urban gangs in aspects of drug trafficking activities (United States Department of State, 2012: 199-122).

119-122). Even though there is not enough evidence or/and research to make informed assessments about the relationships among clientelist politics, violent criminal activity and the drug trade, there are warning signs.

Several interviewees contended that competition over clientelist resources has added a new dimension to party-political conflict and violence in Belize—beyond the usual tensions between partisan opponents and occasional acts of vandalism. There are two strands of this argument. The first is that there is now noticeable conflict among clients competing for benefits, especially at times of heightened availability.<sup>512</sup> Just as Belize's small size allows for a significant degree of client monitoring by politicians, clients can also monitor fellow clients. Several citizens spoke grudgingly about what others had received and in some communities tensions can run high. Several brokers informed that dealing with such tensions was one of the more challenging parts of their responsibilities. In 2008, when the distribution of the 'Venezuela money' was in full swing, police and even Belize Defence Force soldiers had to be called in to some locations to keep the peace.<sup>513</sup> The second set of arguments centres around the contention that, in times of scarcity of clientelist resources (or after periods of high availability), the incidence of crime can spike. For example, one interviewee suggested, albeit based on circumstantial evidence, that higher levels of criminal activity can be directly related to periods of lower handout-politics activity, including periods after elections and after spike points such as Christmas.<sup>514</sup>

Some persons interviewed for this study speculated that 'private' money related to the drug trade in Belize has been gradually entering clientelist politics. There is little doubt that this is indeed the case. Although most politicians were reluctant to discuss drug operators as possible sources of clientelist resources, several agreed that this was indeed beginning to occur in Belize. For example, one politician stated that, "Drug money does enter the benefits politics

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<sup>512</sup> Although this may seem counter-intuitive (in that conflict can also increase when benefits are scarce), the knowledge that there are more benefits available around certain periods can also increase competition among (needy and/or greedy) clients. The example of the 'Venezuela money' is a case in point.

<sup>513</sup> For example, in 'The Curse of the Venezuela Money'. (2008, January 11). *7 News*, it was reported that "multiple teams of police and Belize Defence soldiers, armed with M16 rifles, stood guard outside" the office of the PUP candidate for the Port Loyola constituency.

<sup>514</sup> Interview with Dr Francis Smith, constituency candidate (PUP), 30 January 2011, Belize City.

machinery via some politicians. However, unlike Jamaica, it is more indirect.”<sup>515</sup> Another politician revealed that he was approached by a person known to be deeply involved in the drug trade with an offer to supply money for handouts and transportation for his campaign.<sup>516</sup> The politician was quick to clarify that he refused because he knew there would be a catch, and the person gave his ‘support’ to the other party’s candidate. A representative in Belize City shared (still with some alarm) that a known drug dealer in his constituency had approached him with the information there was a hit on him—and had offered ‘protection’.<sup>517</sup>

Indeed, the quid pro quo related to the alleged drug baron/politician relationship is no different than it is elsewhere in the region: in return for financial inducements to politicians and/or public officers, the transshipment of drugs (by land, air and sea) is facilitated.<sup>518</sup> In a recent and comprehensive study of the drug trade in Central America (Bunck and Fowler, 2012), the authors found the following assessment of drug relationships (in the Caribbean) apt for Belize:

Drug barons, dons,...and ‘bigmen’ and international entrepreneurs all have connections with government, commercial houses and party-bosses. Overlapping, vertically-integrated chains of patron-client relationships ripple throughout society, eventually connecting top to bottom...” (Gary Brana-Shute as cited in Bunck and Fowler, 2012: 102)

A few other politicians and some citizens suggested that particular Belize City gangs may have started to affiliate with particular political parties (or vice-versa).<sup>519</sup> Some politicians even named specific gangs they believed were associated with particular elements of the other party. One alleged that Belize City gang members have been used to provide ‘security’ for particular politicians—even at party events in other districts such as Orange Walk.<sup>520</sup> A comprehensive study on male violence and gangs in Belize City reported claims by certain gang leaders that gangs have supported particular politicians at election time in return for certain favours later on (Gayle and Mortis, 2010: 315-

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<sup>515</sup> Interview with M. Espat.

<sup>516</sup> Name of interviewee withheld on request.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid.

<sup>518</sup> Albeit before the start of the use of Belize as a major transshipment point for cocaine, one sitting PUP minister of government (Elijio ‘Joe’ Briceño) was arrested and imprisoned in the United States in 1985 for trafficking in the marijuana trade (Bunck and Fowler, 2012: 89). The Belize news media feature regular stories of incidents related to landings of small planes and the washing up of lost bales of cocaine—referred to colloquially as ‘sea lotto.’

<sup>519</sup> See, for example, Narco Money in the Politics of Belize, (2007, October 2). *Amandala*.

<sup>520</sup> Name of interviewee withheld on request.



318). As such, the Jamaican term 'garrison'<sup>521</sup> has gradually begun to creep into the political vocabulary in reference to a small number of constituencies in poorer areas in south-side Belize City that have entrenched representatives and high levels of homogenous voting, as well as high levels of violence. The experience of Jamaica (see Conclusion, section 3) suggests that the red flags of the linkages between clientelist politics, on the one hand, and violence and the drug trade, on the other, are too worrying to ignore.

## **Conclusion**

On balance, the aggregate and macro-level impact of political clientelism on democracy in Belize is overwhelmingly negative. Whereas the relationship between the evolution of formal democracy and political clientelism began as symbiotic, since the 1990s political clientelism has become parasitical to this much-praised element of Belize's politics. Most significantly, the entrenched nature of clientelism suggests that a significant portion of votes, which are 'freely and fairly' counted, may not represent free will in the sense it was originally intended. Additionally, the small size of electoral constituencies has enhanced the prospect that entire elections turn on the buying of political support. Such doubts about Belize's electoral democracy deepen when one considers that entrenched political clientelism contravenes Robert Dahl's core principle of 'equal consideration of interests': "the interests of every person who is subject to the decision must (within the limits of feasibility) be accurately interpreted and made known" (1989: 86). In short, clientelist politicians who purchase political support have little interest in clientelist voters' positions on issues, and voters have less credibility once they have accepted some compensation for voting. Even though clientelist politicians do indeed react to the requests of selected clientelist voters after elections, much of this is aimed at completing bargains with clients and building up the voter base for the next election.

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<sup>521</sup> The definition used by Figueroa and Sives (2002: 83) for Jamaica is adopted for this study: "A veritable fortress where the dominant party and/or its local agents/supporters are able to exercise control over all significant political, economic and community-related social activities" and in which "the dominant party can, under normal circumstances, control the voting process."

The expansion in clientelist politics has also incentivised politicians to exert more discretionary control over formal institutions of resource allocation, weakening many of these in the process. As such, the exercise of formal political power in the Belize version of Westminster government has become more politicised, more discretionary and less accountable. Additionally, political clientelism itself has begun to be seen and treated by some as part of the system itself. In the terminology of Van de Walle, there has been a gradual “codification of clientelism” (The Network of Democracy Research Institutes, 2010: 5). This has been certainly the case, for example, with the constituency stipend and some aspects of educational assistance. Entrenched clientelism has also blurred the lines of power and function between the state and the political parties. As the types and volume of public resources passing through politicians have expanded, Belizeans increasingly see their constituency politicians as problem-solvers of first resort. Over time, as the two major parties have become increasingly clientelist and less differentiated by ideology and programmatic approaches, they have begun to compete mainly on their relative capacity to deliver targeted benefits to individuals and groups across all income levels.

The implications of entrenched political clientelism are also severe for other forms of participation, especially at the level of the constituency. The official function of representatives as legislators has been diminished as their role as patrons to the poor and middle class has grown. Belizean parliamentarians and politicians can be construed as powerful ‘doctor politicians’<sup>522</sup> who operate handout clinics and make ‘house-calls’ to dispense resources to individual clients. For clients of all income levels, these arrangements represent, in effect, another means of engaging with the state and influencing the allocation of public resources. As more Belizeans have come to participate informally through clientelism, other modes of participation are adversely affected. Although some citizens do engage in politics in multiple ways (attending consultations, protests and through CSOs), a portion shun other modes of participation for fear of losing benefits. Belize’s highly personalised, face-to-face

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<sup>522</sup> This is a play on the term ‘Doctor Politics’. As Girvan (2010: 8) noted, Lloyd Best originally used the term to emphasise the “excessive concentration of personal authority in the office the Prime Minister” during the reign of Dr Eric Williams in Trinidad and Tobago.

politics, which facilitates monitoring voter compliance, has magnified this disincentive effect on participation. Both political parties and some CSOs have witnessed a decrease in volunteerism because of the spread of ‘compensation for participation’. Moreover, independent candidates, smaller political parties, lower-income persons, women and other under-represented groups face one more challenging barrier to the doors of electoral politics.

From the substantive perspective that democracy ought to contribute to social and economic development and to the improvement of people’s lives, the impact of political clientelism can appear mixed on the surface. In the skewed social and economic context described, handouts from politicians mean survival for some and enhanced comfort for many. This now-entrenched informal welfare function explains why a powerful broker in Belize, when asked about alternatives to handout politics, stated that, “There will be chaos from people if there is nothing to replace it.”<sup>523</sup> In a similar vein, Smith (2007: 2) warned that, “Limit this [political clientelism] and there is disfigurement of a fully-functioning welfare system relied upon by the majority of the citizenry.” However, the chapter findings support the argument that the distributive benefits of political clientelism are largely short term and, in any case, are heavily outweighed by the overall damaging effect on most aspects of social democracy—including on social benefits distribution itself. A former minister put this in proper perspective: “Belizeans are not so much victims of the ‘micro-benefits politics’ that we see at the clinics and on the streets. They are more victims of the ‘macro-benefits politics’ system that is broken.”<sup>524</sup> Rosberg captured the essence of this position well in his analysis of the impact of clientelism on community development:

[T]he result of all this animation [competition for clientelist benefits] is a kind of “dynamic stasis” where the overall structure of society—the interdependence of the classes of rich and poor—remains unchanged, notwithstanding the fevered scramble among survivors and some shifting of roles. The dependence on patrons and the competition with peers strengthened the position of the patrons and undermined the solidarity of the clients as a class. As a result, effective pressure groups that are able to exact or sustain change seldom come into being and community development stagnates (Rosberg, 2005: 133).

From the lack of standardised means-testing for social welfare at political clinics, to the waste associated with ‘irrational’ and reckless budgetary

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<sup>523</sup> Interview with Broker Dan.

<sup>524</sup> Interview with Mark Espat.

spending, the loss of public revenue, the disincentive effect on governance reform, the damaging favours given to donors, and the contribution to political corruption, the implications of rampant clientelism for social democracy are indeed overwhelmingly bleak. Simultaneously, the goal of finding alternatives and sustainable solutions to social-economic problems is undermined by clientelist imperatives. Indeed, by 2011 political clientelism had become a distinguishing feature of Belize's political culture itself. Taken together, the implications highlighted in this chapter help explain the somewhat sensationalist warning of new politician Francis Smith: "If we don't stop [handout politics] we will end up a failed state...with more poverty, garrisons, more crime, drug barons running things...the state will lose control. It is just not sustainable."<sup>525</sup> Similarly, Prime Minister Barrow assessed the challenge in these terms: "It [handout politics] is a hell of a conundrum because the more you try to address [social need] via the area representatives the more you are ensuring that the already weak system becomes weaker—and obviously you are going to reach a point of no return."<sup>526</sup>

Ironically, it is indeed the difficulty of sustaining the inflationary demand for material inducements for clients, and the problems created thereby, that have contributed to the electoral losses of both major political parties. There is, in effect, a point of diminishing returns for incumbent parties due to the macro-level social, economic and financial inefficiencies generated by high levels of political clientelism. In the Belize case, fiscal crises and political corruption scandals, both of which are fed by clientelism, have been the most cited factors that have helped tip the electoral advantage to an eager opposition party. Yet this paradox of clientelism does not deter parties and politicians from clientelist politics. As one astute politician summarised, "Handouts won't always make you win, but not doing it can cost you the election."<sup>527</sup>

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<sup>525</sup> Interview with F. Smith.

<sup>526</sup> Interview with Barrow.

<sup>527</sup> Interview with Saldivar.

# CONCLUSION

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## **BELIZE AS A CLIENTELIST DEMOCRACY: FINDINGS, COMPARISONS AND PROSPECTS FOR CHANGE**

### **Introduction: New Bottle, Old Wine**

Early assessments of Belize's seventh post-independence general election in March 2012—the first consecutive electoral victory for the UDP—indicate that the trajectory of political clientelism continues decidedly upwards. In a first since independence, the losing party (the PUP) refused to accept the official results based, in part, on allegations of voter bribery.<sup>528</sup> During its 2008-2012 administration, the UDP had further mastered the art of targeting more public resources as inducements to individual voters, and a larger number of UDP intra-party pre-election conventions and constituency contests were characterised by highly organised and well-resourced political machineries. In particular, the UDP and most of its politicians had 'upped' their game at the critical level of operating effective day-to-day political clinics—further consolidating the now indisputable narrative of the PUP and UDP having but superficial differences between them. Indeed, the long-standing perception that the PUP, Belize's first political party, is more adept at clientelist politics than the UDP had finally evaporated. This achievement of clientelist parity between the parties is one further unambiguous indicator of the extent to which political clientelism has, since its innocent beginnings in the 1950s, become an entrenched element of Belize's modern politics.

Against the backdrop of the legacies of colonial authoritarianism, the 'Belizeanisation' of the Westminster model, persistent social and economic

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<sup>528</sup> Of the various allegations of vote buying in constituency elections made by the PUP against the incumbent UDP, one was formally lodged on 2, April 2012 and heard by the Supreme Court in May, where it was dismissed. The case was brought by the PUP's candidate for Cayo North, Orlando Habet, who lost to the UDP's Elvin Penner by only 17 votes. Penner was accused of bribing voters with money on election day and with citizenship papers in the lead-up to the election (Habet vs. Penner: Another Election Petition is Struck Out. (2012, May 24). *Channel 5 News*). The UDP's Lee Mark Chang, who lost to PUP Leader, Francis Fonseca, also lodged an election petition alleging voter bribery. That, too, was thrown out by the Supreme Court (Election Petition Against PUP Leader Fails. (2012, May 23). *Channel 5 News*).

inequities and the rapid onset of the tough imperatives of a neoliberal world, Belize's post-independence consolidation of intensely competitive two-party politics represented a potent yeast for the fermentation of a new variant of the old and bitter-sweet wine of clientelism. Clientelism has not only expanded; it has reached dominant levels of entrenchment in the post-colonial societal relations of this small and fragile young democracy. In examining Belize's modern political history through the analytic lens of modern political clientelism, this study has focused on five major research questions: (1) How did political clientelism emerge in the formative period of Belize's modern politics? (2) What are the principal manifestations of the expansion of political clientelism in Belize in the post-independence period? (3) What factors have contributed to this high rate of expansion at the same time as formal democratic advances in Belize? (4) What are the critical implications of widespread clientelism for Belize's democracy? (5) How does the experience of Belize compare to experiences of other independent parliamentary democracies in the Commonwealth Caribbean? In this concluding chapter, a first section summarizes the findings on the first four research questions. A second section explores these Belize findings in comparative Commonwealth Caribbean perspective. A closing section discusses political clientelism as an analytic construct and draws final conclusions.

In setting the relevant historical backdrop for the analysis of the pre-independence emergence and post-independence expansion of political clientelism, Chapter 1 distinguished the post-adult suffrage variant of clientelism from at least two other pre-existing types in late-colonial Belize. One form, which has been denoted 'old' clientelism, was manifested in Belize's traditional *alcalde* village system and in informal relationships of land ownership and use. The second form was that practiced by the British colonial authorities to dispense scarce resources such as jobs, land and social aid to individuals and groups. The key feature that links these earlier forms of clientelism to its modern, party-based variant is that inequalities of access to resources and to personal security often lead to skewed, albeit largely rational, relationships of clientelist exchange in the absence of viable alternatives.

It is in this sense that this thesis conceptualised 'modern political clientelism' as a sub-set of generic clientelism as well as a component of Belize's modern political relations that emerged in the 1950s. Three clear phases in Belize's trajectory of modern political clientelism were identified. The 'innocent' phase from 1954 to 1980 is characterised by the emergence and rooting of modern political clientelism in pre-independence Belize. This was followed by the still-formative 'bridging' phase from 1981 to circa 1991, Belize's first decade of full political independence, and by the current 'rampant' phase since the 1990s, when political clientelism witnessed its most rapid period of expansion and entrenchment.

## **Clientelist Democracy in Belize: A Synopsis of Findings**

### ***'Innocent' Foundations: 1954-1980***

The use of the term 'innocent' to denote this formative phase of modern political clientelism captures the sharp contrast with the rampant expansion that followed after independence. However, it is clear that aspects of the pre-independence experience with clientelism were indeed not 'innocent' in intent. As Belize approached nationhood, party-based clientelist activity was indeed very minimal compared to 2011. Yet it was in this period (1954-1980) that the foundation necessary for the expansion was laid. In 1954, when a new constitution gave the vote to all Belizeans and electoral relevance to the nascent political parties, the elements essential for the emergence of modern political clientelism were in mostly place. After a period (in the 1960s and early 1970s) characterised by genuine but inadequate attempts at programmatic approaches to address deep-seated social and economic problems, the dominant PUP gradually integrated clientelist practices into its repertoire of strategies to appeal to voters. By 1980, handouts and favours in return for political support were more on offer and more needed, and the political pendulum was beginning to swing from programmatic politician-citizen relationships to one with increasing features of clientelist exchange.

The primary and driving causal factor in this formative period was the introduction and consolidation of increasingly competitive party politics in a societal context of on-going unmet livelihood needs and greater access to

political power for local leaders in the nascent Westminster system. As the opposition UDP improved its electoral performance and slowly entered the handout game, the PUP stepped up its direct appeals to individual voters and communities through the emerging clinic system and targeted allocation of public goods. The inherited public institutions of the emerging state were simply unable to meet most people's needs and expectations. By the 1970s, weakened labour unions and decreased activity of social charity groups represented inadequate alternatives to the growing dominance of the political parties as social mediators. As such, the option of influencing the distribution of public resources by the bartering of political support became increasingly rational. As the tentacles of competitive party politics spread, political clientelism was gradually being introduced to other parts of the country from Belize City. The populist and paternalistic leadership style of George Price, Belize's 'hero in the crowd' of the nationalist movement, significantly textured the formative phase of clientelism.<sup>529</sup> In the personalised politics of the small state, Price was not only the 'father of the nation' but also its 'gran patron'. Additionally, Belize's diverse multi-ethnicity had begun to affect how politicians, communities and citizens bargained about the distribution of resources.

Importantly, however, aptitude at clientelism was not yet a dominant indicator of difference between the two main parties. The incumbent PUP and the opposition NIP (later UDP) presented distinctive national policies to the electorate, especially with regard to political independence, and the vast majority of party support was issue-based and voluntary. In the context of these times, the 'helping the people' justification of Price and other early politicians was understandable and, for some, genuine. Yet in a poor emerging democracy with increasingly competitive party politics there is a thin line between the provision of handouts and favours for 'helping' and for deliberately influencing the vote choices of individual citizens. In aggregate, these beginnings were the right set of ingredients required for the rapid spread of clientelist politician-citizen relationships. Regardless of which party was in power or who was premier during this pre-independence period, it is difficult to conceive of a

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<sup>529</sup> This reference comes from the title of Singham's (1968) well-known book on the leadership style of Caribbean nationalist leaders, *The Hero and the Crowd in a Colonial Polity*.



significantly different path being travelled with the particular set of political, social and economic conditions that converged.

### ***A Bridging Decade: 1981-circa 1990***

This transitional but, still, formative decade was marked by gradual increase in clientelist politics as politicians adapted to their new powers and confronted multiple economic and social challenges (including the settlement of tens of thousands of immigrants) of leading a newly independent state. However, handouts were still mostly low in value, the use of public resources to target individuals was limited, party-based voluntarism was still significant and allegations of voter bribery were rare. Yet there were important developments relevant for the expansion of clientelist activity and for analysis of its causes. Central among these was the further intensification of competitive party politics as the UDP won its first general election in 1984 and the PUP regained power in 1989. These elections started a trend of successive peaceful alternations in government and fully consolidated the competitive two-party system. Importantly, the UDP had its first real political tutelage (1984-1989) in using the powers of government and incumbency to partisan advantage. Like the PUP before it, and to similar accusations of political victimisation, the governing UDP engaged in job patronage and devised new ways of using public funds for targeted constituency-based programmes. In practical terms, clientelist politics became a two-party strategy in the 1980s—it was no longer only the domain of the PUP.

Key among other political precedents was the gradual diminishing of ideological and policy differences between the PUP and the UDP. As such, by the 1989 election voters had fewer substantive distinctions around which to base voting decisions—opening the door to the further use of clientelist appeals by politicians. This in turn was facilitated by the flow of more private money (as well as influence) from big donors into the two main parties as both became more commercial party machines. Also, the legislative amendments relating to the Elections and Boundaries Commission in 1988 and 1989 gave incumbent political parties significant potential advantage in matters relating to election administration and registration. The large new immigrant population was about

to become a significant voting bloc. Importantly, the decade also demonstrated that a government's capacity to deliver and to increase clientelist inducements is often directly related to the developments in the macro economy. Although economic hardships between 1981 and 1986 constrained both the PUP and UDP governments' potential to engage in clientelism, improvements in the fiscal situation provided more such opportunity in the remainder of the decade.

***Rampant and Entrenched Clientelist Politics: circa 1991-2011***

By the time Belize celebrated its thirtieth anniversary of independence in 2011, the manifestations of entrenched political clientelism represented a colossal shift from its pre-independence beginnings. The PUP and UDP operated political clinics in almost every constituency, an estimated 20 per cent of the electorate were participating in the handout game, the types and value of resources exchanged had multiplied, volunteerism for political parties had virtually disappeared and clientelist politics had spread to every municipality and to most villages. Belize's politicians had shown themselves to be 'equal opportunity' patrons across urban and rural communities, gender, ethnicity and migratory status. Although the clear majority of clients at the constituency level have been poorer or lower-income Belizeans, representatives of the middle and business classes have been increasingly playing the game for higher value exchanges. Women (who have experienced higher rates of unemployment and have headed the majority of single-parent households) outnumbered men as clients but, on the whole, men have received more in terms of monetary value.

Overall, the profile of 'the client' in Belize is not straightforward. In addition to the possible sets and overlapping categories of clients described above, there are two other considerations implied in this thesis. One is that there is a core of what might be denoted 'permanent clients' who, because of need and/or deliberate opportunistic intent, have no interest in changing their 'client' status. Around this core is a shifting number of what may be denoted 'transient clients' who move in and out of clientelist relationships based on on-going assessment of needs, opportunities and risks. Importantly, the absolute numbers of both types of clients have been growing since the 1990s. It is more than likely that the estimate of 20 per cent of the electorate that is engaged in some way in

clientelist politics—which was based on politicians estimates—is indeed very conservative.

Although the ‘political’ degrees of freedom that permitted clientelism to expand in the 1990s and thereafter were high overall, the causal analysis confirmed that the heightened intensity of electoral competition remained the principal explanatory factor. Importantly, it was through party competition in constituencies that politicians and citizens interacted to establish the dyadic relationships upon which additional political clinics were constructed. As such, intense party competition, within the Westminster model and FPTP electoral system, provided the overarching political framework to make the other basic supporting conditions (control of resource allocation, unequal access to needed resources and ineffective alternatives) more causally relevant. This is not to say that political clientelism would not have emerged and grown to some extent without the intensity of party competition described, but this was the indispensable ingredient for the level of expansion witnessed. As the PUP and UDP became even more alike in their policy positions and governing styles, aptitude at clientelist politics moved up as a defining feature around which the parties competed for votes. Overall, the Belize case demonstrates that rapid expansion and entrenchment of political clientelism can be conceptualised both as a product of intensified competitive party politics and, subsequently, as a distinctive feature of such competition.

By far, the most significant of the other basic supporting factors that fuelled the expansion of clientelism has been the qualitative shift in the nature of poverty. Although the incidence of poverty has been high since the 1950s (and certainly increased between 1995 and 2009), income disparities have certainly widened. This situation constituted a social context that was ripe for more politicians to become patrons and for more Belizeans to become clients. The alternatives of formal social programmes and civil society interventions have not been sufficiently effective to dampen citizens’ attraction to clientelist exchanges. As such, it was, in part, the failure of formal democracy to address social and economic inequalities that created a ‘hole’ for clientelism to enter, widen and embed itself. In short, poverty and inadequate alleviation responses helped to

make vote buying more cost-effective as an electoral strategy. Although a nationwide phenomenon, this relationship has been most observable in pockets of high poverty and deprivation in seven densely populated constituencies in Belize City. Besides contributing to the increase in poverty and inequality, the socio-economic policy decisions of the period fuelled other developments that favoured clientelist relationships and behaviour. Implementation of neoliberal economic policies (especially generous fiscal concessions to investors) expanded opportunities for politicians to use both public resources and private donations for clientelist exchanges. As such, the Belize case illustrates the clear linkages that clientelism has to international economic policy developments, generally, and the disproportionate roles that very wealthy individual investors (such as Ashcroft) can play in funding clientelist politics in small states, particularly.

The other causal factors explored in this thesis are best described as secondary in their contribution to the rampant expansion of clientelism. The dominant level of control over resource allocation institutions, and the ease with which such control could be increased in the context of Belize's Westminster system, provided local leaders with more options and means to dispense state resources to targeted groups and individuals. Once experienced, this power of control itself became the big prize and, therefore, a key impetus for the main parties to use clientelism to win elections. Belize's weak institutional framework for the management of elections, monitoring voter-registration, pursuing allegations of voter bribery and regulating campaign contributions has fostered a permissive environment for clientelist activities. Although not causes of the expansion, multi-ethnicity and small-state size (the two Belize-specific contextual factors selected for analysis) have influenced how clientelism has grown and manifested itself. Clientelist politics in Belize do not have a strong ethnic dimension, but multi-ethnicity and the presence of new bloc of (mostly poor) immigrant voters have provided readily identifiable networks through which politicians and clients negotiate exchanges. Without doubt, small state size has accelerated the growth and coloured the manifestations of political clientelism across all phases of its trajectory. Belizean political clinic networks are small, highly personalised operations in which politicians and brokers, on

the one hand, and clients, on the other, can directly engage and monitor each other. In this regard, the Belize case illustrates that clientelism in states with tiny constituencies often disproportionately determines election outcomes due to the relative ease and affordability of influencing individual voters via material and other inducements.

Importantly, this thesis has argued that although the main political parties initially drove political clientelism from the top (1950s-1980s), the pendulum swung towards demand-driven motivations after the 1990s as more Belizeans began using clientelist ties proactively to engage politicians and improve their access to resources. More people began to view their votes as valuable and tradable commodities, and clientelism became a proven alternative mode of political participation for a significant portion of the population. As such, it evolved beyond its use by politicians as an electoral strategy to become a more fluid relationship that was simultaneously both top-down and bottom-up. By 2011, political clientelism had become a systemic and widely-accepted political interdependency between people and politicians—to the extent that it is a dominant feature of Belize's political culture.

### ***Implications for Belize's Democracy***

Because of the conceptualisation of democracy adopted in this thesis, assessments of the impact of clientelism on the quality of democracy required some analysis of its social and economic implications. Although this thesis has demonstrated the challenges inherent in such analysis, its findings suggest that the most important socio-economic implications do indeed relate to questions of distribution and social welfare. It is clear that the distributive impact of clientelism for an increasing number of Belizeans cannot be taken lightly. Given the limitations and failures of the state's social welfare system, a 41.3 per cent poverty rate, high levels of income inequality and the general unevenness of the socio-economic playing field, handouts from politicians have represented access to needed resources to a significant proportion of poor Belizeans. Over the 30 years since independence, clientelism has evolved into a de facto informal (indeed, semi-formal) welfare system for many. There is even some merit to the argument that this informal welfare role has helped to 'hold things

together' in a context of great social need. However, the limited political stability that may have been derived from clientelism's (mostly short-term) distributive function has been heavily outweighed by its overall damaging impact on most aspects of democracy. Moreover, the aggregate and longer-term implications for socio-economic distribution and welfare are also decidedly negative. The informal rules and needs of the clinic system have resulted in less means-testing in social welfare programmes, more scroungers, waste of public funds and, in general, less focus on programmatic solutions to socio-economic needs. Additionally, the spoils of the clientelist game are disproportionately enjoyed by those in the middle class and business class who are also aided by politicians. In particular, concessions given to party donors have contributed to a loss of public revenue and more political corruption. Importantly, clientelist 'solutions' have undercut the urgent imperative to find alternative, sustainable and systemic solutions to socio-economic problems.

The institutional implications of clientelism are highly detrimental to democracy—especially to the extent that they have further weakened the very public institutions that are supposed to address social problems. In order to fulfil bargains with clients and build up their voter base for the next election, clientelist politicians have exerted more discretionary control over Belize's formal institutions of resource allocation. Formal political power in Belize's version of Westminster government has become more centralised, more personalised and more discretionary than before clientelist practices became so deeply entrenched. At the same time, lines of power and function between public institutions and political parties have become increasingly blurred. Over time, political parties themselves have become less programmatic and more clientelist, placing even less emphasis on membership recruitment through ideological and policy distinctions. The fact that more citizens now interact with government through patron-politicians at the constituency level, has worrying consequences for participatory democracy. The formal function of representatives as legislators has become secondary to their informal role as patrons. As informal citizen participation through clientelism has expanded, participation through formal public institutions and civil society organisations has gradually come to be perceived as less effective. The highly personalised and

face-to-face nature of small-state politics has magnified this disincentive effect on non-clientelist participation. Additionally, because of the high costs of clientelism, rival political parties, poorer Belizeans, women and other under-represented groups have had even more difficulty getting a foothold in electoral politics.

The analysis of the implications of clientelism for Belize's practice of formal democracy has highlighted three key paradoxes of the phenomenon. First, even though formal democracy (especially competitive elections within the Westminster system) has provided the basic conditions for clientelism to expand, this expansion has shaken some of the very foundations of formal democracy. Even though elections remain largely free and fair, a significant portion of the votes cast represent neither free will (of those who sold their votes) nor fairness (to those who voted their free will). When a significant number of votes have been bartered for resources and when ballot secrecy is compromised, one cannot be sure that intra-party elections, local elections, constituency elections or general elections are reflective of the majority's free will. Additionally, the pervasive nature of the illegal activity of vote buying itself has been a powerful indicator of growing disrespect for the rule of law—among both politicians and people.

The second paradox has to do with the question of the degree of patron/client voluntarism in clientelist exchanges—as discussed in the conceptual review in the Introduction. The Belize case illustrates that, although both clients and politician-patrons, in theory, engaged in voluntary exchanges as clientelism took root and expanded, a sense of obligation (to so engage) has become a part of the 'practical' equation for some clients and some politicians. As clientelism has become entrenched in a societal context of growing inequality and intense party competition, a portion of clients have become economically dependent on clientelist resources and most politicians believe they have no alternative but to be patrons. In a real sense, then, the degree of voluntarism has decreased for both clients and patrons as clientelism has become entrenched and systemic. As such, the Belize case supports a theoretical approach to clientelism that is not simply either voluntary or not voluntary, but that, in practice, moves across a

dynamic and, sometimes overlapping, voluntary/involuntary spectrum—for both clients and patrons.

The third paradox is that clientelist activities eventually have diminishing returns for incumbent parties due to the social, economic and financial inefficiencies they breed. Inability to service the inflationary demand for material inducements by clients has been one reason why both PUP and UDP governments have lost elections. In particular, rampant political corruption, ineffective fiscal management and public perceptions that politicians have become too pliable as clients of the ‘Ashcrofts’ of the world (which have all been fuelled by clientelism) have sometimes shifted popular support to an eager opposition party. Yet these paradoxes do not deter parties and politicians from clientelist politics in a small state in which entire elections have turned on buying political support in selected constituencies.

In summary, most of the tens of thousands of dyadic clientelist transactions made annually at the constituency level in the Belize context are, on the surface, rational individual choices on the part of citizens, as well as politicians. Clientelism does represent an alternative mode of political participation and does have short-term distributive benefits for some Belizeans in a social context of poverty, unequal access to resources, broken social institutions and an unlevel playing field for commerce. However, when taken collectively and assessed in the longer-term, these myriad rational dyadic transactions lead to irrational governance behaviour, poor civic practices and damaging consequences at macro-political and macro-economic levels. The majority of the people have ended up with the short end of the stick. On the whole, the manifestations of the high incidence of political clientelism in Belize have predominantly negative consequences for the country’s formal, participatory and social democracy.

### **Belize’s Experience in Commonwealth Caribbean Comparative Perspective**

The potential academic value of a national case study lies not only in advancing understanding of specific phenomena in a particular country context, but also in



providing added material for comparisons with one or more other countries. Within the research scope of this thesis, it was deemed useful, at a minimum, to engage in some degree of comparative analysis with other independent states of the Commonwealth Caribbean. These states share a common parliamentary political model and similar post-independence democratisation experiences, but several also have unique country-specific characteristics. As noted in the introductory chapter, this comparative exercise is limited and directed by the extent and content of existing political clientelism research. The fact that Jamaica has received most research attention is related, in part, to its long domination of most aspects of social science research generally in the region.<sup>530</sup> It is also explained by the high academic interest in the specific manifestations of Jamaica's particular brand of political clientelism—garrison politics, high levels of political violence and the deep political influence of drug gangs. However, a resourceful use of national studies, comparative governance texts and relevant newspaper articles makes it possible to identify insightful similarities and distinctions with the Belize findings—beyond the case of Jamaica. This comparative analysis is organised around the major factors highlighted by the Belize findings: the manifestations of the growth and prevalence of clientelism, the primary causal roles of competitive party politics and socio-economic inequality, the supporting causal roles of specific country-contextual variables and the key implications for democracy.<sup>531</sup>

### ***On the Prevalence of Clientelist Politics in the Region***

A close reading of the existing literature indicates that there is general agreement that political clientelism has grown steadily across the region over the 50-year period since Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago became independent in 1962. For example, apart from the comprehensive works by Stone (1980) and Edie (1991, 1994b) on Jamaica, the prevalence of clientelism has been highlighted as part of wider studies by Ryan and Gordon (1988) on Trinidad and Tobago, Griffin (1997) on Antigua and Barbuda, Emmanuel (1993) on the Eastern Caribbean, and Ryan (1999, 2001) and Payne and Sutton

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<sup>530</sup> As one informal indicator, a keyword search of 'Jamaica and politics' on Amazon Books (on 16 July 2012) resulted in 755 listings. The next two (in the top three were) 420 for Trinidad and Tobago and 333 for Guyana. Most other Caribbean states, including Belize, had well under 100 listings.

<sup>531</sup> In those cases where there are more than one or numerous country examples, the author's selection is based on an assessment of which is/are most illustrative, and on the objective of spreading examples among several states.

(1993) on the region as a whole. Recent national and regional reports on governance and a scan of newspaper articles also suggest that all the states of the region manifest high levels of clientelist politics. However, the paucity of national case studies and surveys of similar depth and breadth limits cross-national comparisons of the relative prevalence of political clientelism.

One plausible comparative insight suggested by the available material is that the incidence of political clientelism in Belize is closer to that in Jamaica (which is often perceived to have very high prevalence in the region) than it is to Barbados (which is perceived to have only moderate prevalence). In the case of Jamaica, Stone (1980: 96) used survey data to estimate that 51 per cent of the Jamaican electorate in 1980 was pre-dominantly engaged in electoral politics via clientelist ties.<sup>532</sup> Over three decades later in 2011, an independent survey found that over one-third of the Jamaican electorate sampled had engaged in vote trading (Budd, 2011).<sup>533</sup> With regard to Barbados, and in absence of survey or other statistical information, the moderate prevalence assessment is based largely on the general perceptions of political observers in the region. Indeed, Barbados, which has also led the region in overall human development indicators, is widely viewed as the jewel in the crown of democratic governance. The highly respected Caribbean political scientist Selwyn Ryan (1999: 132) is among those to suggest that Barbados has exhibited some, but less, clientelist tendencies than other states in the region. However, as recent allegations of vote buying and party-based patronage in Barbados indicate, this may be more perception than reality and requires further research.<sup>534</sup> In comparison, the 2005 SPEAR survey found 31.8 per cent of Belize's electorate willing to engage in voting for money, and this study estimates that at least one-fifth of the Belizean electorate is involved in clientelist relationships. Thus Belize is probably very close, if not just next, to Jamaica with regard to the prevalence of clientelism in the Commonwealth Caribbean. Indeed, with specific regard to vote buying, the 2010 AmericasBarometer poll (2011: 1), which asked the same question of all

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<sup>532</sup> Stone found 25 per cent of the rest of the sample to be issue-driven and 24 per cent to be apathetic/not involved.

<sup>533</sup> The survey was conducted by Dr Herbert Gayle, social anthropologist at the University of the West Indies.

<sup>534</sup> See for example, The Evolution of Welfare. (2012, March 2). *Barbados Advocate*; and, Barbados bans camera phones, cameras from voting locations to prevent fraud. (2008, January 11). *The Daily Nation*.

respondents, indicated that Belize has a higher incidence than Jamaica, as well as than Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago.

The highs and lows of clientelist activity in the course of a year and over a five-year election cycle that was observed in Belize appear normal across the region. However, this study is rather distinctive in examining political clientelism as an on-going, day-to-day political relationship that transcends election campaign periods and vote trading—which are the key focus of most other studies outside of Jamaica. The kinds of resources and favours traded for political support appear to be very similar across the region to those identified for Belize, with minor differences based on context. For example, the following description of clientelist resources in Jamaica has close similarities to the Belize experience:

Several persons in the inner cities received no more than J\$500,<sup>535</sup> though the two modal receipts were J\$2,000 and J\$5,000. The poor were also very likely to be trapped with food. ...There were a few, however, who received as much as 50 pounds of rice, along with (tinned) mackerel. The poor were also likely to receive phone cards and even mattresses. The rural poor were very likely to be baited with livestock, seeds and fertiliser. In a few cases, both rural and urban near-poor were drawn by construction material. A few received vouchers of J\$20,000 and J\$40,000 which they could take to specific hardware stores (Galye as cited in Budd, 2011: 2).

A few comparative observations on actor profiles and operational features can also be drawn from the available information. As in Belize, most clients across the region are poor, but elements of the middle class also participate as clients across the region (Domínguez, 1993: 13). In the case of Jamaica, rural and urban areas both participate in clientelist exchanges, but urban areas tend to have more entrenched clientelism (Gray, 2004: 12-13). Due to the lack of comparable studies, it is not possible to speculate if the Belize finding of women making up a larger proportion of clients also pertains in the rest of the region. Even in the case of Jamaica, the available studies and surveys give only passing attention to the gender issue. Although the overall process of negotiating clientelist exchanges appears similar across the region, there are some differences. For example, party membership was an absolute prerequisite for gaining certain favours such as public service jobs in Guyana during the Forbes Burnham era (Garner, 2008: 163). In Jamaica, local government,

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<sup>535</sup> US \$1 = circa \$90 Jamaican dollars (July 2012).

community and civil society leaders have played a key broker/liaison role on behalf of politicians (Edie, 1989: 6-12; 1994b)—much more than in Belize, where the use of full-time brokers is still quite a recent development.<sup>536</sup> Overall, although the prevalence of clientelist politics in all states across the region is acknowledged (even if not discussed openly), more research is needed to determine country-specific manifestations and to inform more substantive comparisons in this area.

### ***On Competitive Party Politics as the Key Causal Variable***

How do the Belize findings on the causes of the emergence and expansion of political clientelism compare to the wider regional experience? Although few Caribbean scholars have utilised clientelism as an analytic construct to examine the politics of the pre-independence period, there is a historical narrative of local elites across the region inheriting the power relationships and practices of British colonial authorities, and then adapting these to their political advantage in the post-independence context. In relation to the colonial backdrop for the emergence of modern clientelist politics, the similarity of the Belize findings to those on Jamaica is particularly close. For example, Stone (1980: 94) viewed party-based clientelism in Jamaica as a replacement for the "power base of capital and property ownership which gave the traditional planter-merchant ruling class" their controlling influence under colonialism. And Edie (1991: 22-24) pinpointed the skewed power and social relationships of Jamaica's sugar-based plantation economy as the contextual background for the emergence of party-based clientelist relationships. Although Belize did not have a plantation system, its forestry-based economy exhibited similar relationships of skewed economic and political power relationships in the colonial period (Bolland, 1977, 1988). As in the case of Belize, all the countries of the region had some form of British-dominated state patronage before independence—based on unequal access to resources and political power. Significantly, the strategic use of work and relief programmes, in pre-independence Belize had parallels in other British colonies (Bolland, 2001) and were part of "an entrenched system of patronage administered through the welfare state" (Duncan and Woods, 2007: 211).

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<sup>536</sup> The explanation for the use of local government leaders as brokers in Jamaica is likely related, in part, to the very limited authority of local government bodies and the need for leaders at this level to access resources for their communities. In contrast, the local government system in Belize has had relatively more autonomy from central government, and therefore patron-client ties are more independent from MPs.

Generally, as political parties became established in the context of decolonisation, as the Westminster system became consolidated and as nationalist Caribbean leaders gained political power after self-government and independence, the stage was set for the emergence of modern political clientelism. In this regard, the Belize findings conform to the common narrative across the region of modern political clientelism emerging as an element in the evolution and manifestations of competitive party politics after the onset of national elections under universal adult suffrage.<sup>537</sup> Indeed, there is widespread acceptance of the view that competitive party politics is the primary factor accounting for the rapid spread of clientelist politics after independence in the region. As Lewis (1976: 7) noted, “the transfer of power to local leaders...widened and deepened the connections between populace and government.” Comparative political scholars, examining the region’s post-independence governance experience, have made observations such as “the political system thus became an arena [for parties and politicians] to outbid each other to dispense patronage to followers” (Ryan, 1994: 236), and “political parties have traditionally maintained the loyalty of their supporters in large part through patronage” (Huber, 1993: 93). However, even in the limited confines of the Commonwealth Caribbean, contextual differences, as well as the exact timing of independence for the colonies have produced subtle, but consequential, distinctions in the development and manifestations of competitive party politics, and by extension clientelist politics.

At least three variants of party-based clientelism can be identified in the emergence of electoral democracy across the region: two-party, multi-party and one-party/authoritarian clientelism. The two-party and multi-party types are similar to the extent that two or more competitive parties evolved, both (or all) of which employed clientelism to more or less equal extents over time. The one-party/authoritarian category includes those states in which clientelism has been used for extended periods of time by authoritarian-style regimes as a key tool to maintain popular support and remain in power. This is not to suggest that other

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<sup>537</sup> Adult suffrage was granted by the United Kingdom to its Caribbean colonies at different dates in the 1940s and 1950s. Although the United Kingdom was ready to grant independence to most of its British colonies at the time, factors such as the extent of unrest generated by nationalist movements, fears of lack of economic viability and, in the case of Belize, a territorial dispute, determined the exact timing.

parties are absent or inactive, but rather to highlight the abuse of clientelism to ensure long periods of one-party rule within the context of the Westminster parliamentary model.

Like Belize, the majority of states in the region have been examples of competitive two-party or multi-party (defined as at least three parties that can win seats in parliament) clientelism. Even in those cases in which the first nationalist party won several consecutive elections at the onset, these regimes allowed for a significant degree of open competition from at least one other party in elections that were largely free and fair. Opposition parties, which often railed against clientelism, embraced it when in power, eventually leading to the aforementioned political snowball effect spurred on by electoral competition. Apart from Belize, Jamaica, the Bahamas and Barbados are key examples of states characterised by long-standing duopoly party systems and the expansion of clientelism alongside party competition. Ironically, it is in the even smaller states of the Eastern Caribbean, such as St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica and Grenada, that party competition has tended to multi-party systems, at least for some time.<sup>538</sup> Although the research on political clientelism proper is sparse for the Eastern Caribbean, several governance studies, including Emmanuel (1993), Griffin (1997), Ryan (1999), and Barrow-Giles and Tennyson (2006), have referenced the existence of even more highly personalised 'rum and roti politics'.<sup>539</sup> The intensity of electoral competition among multiple parties and the extent of party-based state patronage are magnified more greatly in these micro-island states.

The key examples of one-party/authoritarian clientelism in the region include Guyana under Forbes Burnham's Peoples National Congress (PNC) from 1964 to 1992,<sup>540</sup> Grenada under Eric Gairy's Grenada United Labour Party (GULP) from 1967 to 1979,<sup>541</sup> and Antigua and Barbuda under the Birds' Antigua Labour Party (ALP) between 1976 and 2004. The authoritarian experiences of

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<sup>538</sup> See Emmanuel (1979, 1992) and Barrow-Giles and Tennyson (2006) for election data that illustrate numbers and performance of political parties competing in elections across the region between 1944-2006.

<sup>539</sup> 'Rum and roti' (or 'rum and corn beef') politics is among similar colloquial terms used in most countries in the region to describe the personal and populist style of politicians who give handouts to constituents.

<sup>540</sup> See Thomas (1983) and Ryan (1999: 181-252) for discussions of authoritarianism in Burnham's Guyana.

<sup>541</sup> See Ryan (1999: 81-99), Henry (1990) and Grenade (2004) for summaries of the Gairy regime and its aftermath.

Guyana and Grenada have been more studied than that of Antigua and Barbuda, which also provides an instructive example of the category. Except for a brief period in the early 1970s, the ALP under the leadership of Vere Bird, and then Lester Bird, governed during most of Antigua and Barbuda's modern politics, including the 23 years after independence in 1981. Henry (1991: 24-28), who has judged the rule of the Birds as one of the most authoritarian in the region, argued that political clientelism actually emerged as a function of competitive party politics during Antigua and Barbuda's brief experience with two-party politics between 1971 to 1976, when an opposition party governed. However, after the ALP was returned to power in 1976, competitive clientelism diminished and was replaced by almost 30 years of one-party patronage. Griffin (1997: 149-150) illustrated how the ALP used state patronage as a preferred tactic to maintain political support and power—even in the face of mounting accusations of public corruption.<sup>542</sup> Henry's (1991: 26-27) analysis would suggest that competitive clientelism 'returned' to Antigua and Barbuda in 2004 when the corruption-plagued ALP was defeated by the United Progressive Party.

Despite the unbroken electoral longevity of George Price and the PUP from 1954 to 1984, Belize's experience with the emergence and growth of political clientelism clearly fits the two-party model, as opposed to the one-party/authoritarian type. Although it did not gain power until 1984, the UDP was not deterred from electoral participation; indeed, it was increasingly competitive over time and won a significant number of local government elections. Price, though hardly a political saint, did not tamper with the electoral process, suppress political opposition or govern in an overly authoritarian manner.<sup>543</sup> Allowing for some contextual differences, the primary role played by competitive party politics in the emergence and take-off of political clientelism in Belize is therefore quite similar to the experiences of other states of the two-party type, particularly to Barbados, Jamaica and the Bahamas. As opposition parties (such as the UDP in the Belize case) became better funded and more

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<sup>542</sup> Other tactics used included abuse of voter registration lists, ballot-tampering, control of broadcast media and refusal to comply with court-issued orders (Griffin, 1997: 147-148).

<sup>543</sup> In his authorised biography of Price, Smith (2011) portrayed Price as a cunning, manipulative and vengeful leader, but without dictatorial or authoritarian tendencies.

competitive, clientelism was increasingly used as strategy to help secure competitive advantage.

There is also a question of whether the timing of political independence in the region is a relevant factor in the development of party-based clientelism. One argument is that states that achieved their independence earlier, such as Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago in 1962, reached a point at which clientelism became entrenched before those that achieved independence later. In the case of Belize, this argument could be relevant for at least two key reasons. First, delayed independence for Belize resulted in the issue of independence remaining the primary question around which the PUP and the UDP differentiated themselves. Even as clientelism was creeping into the PUP's bag of tricks to help win elections before 1981, the PUP was able to maintain its identity as the progressive party of national unity and independence, and paint the UDP as anti-independence and, even, pro-British. In effect, party differentiation based on clientelism was also delayed. In contrast, Caribbean states that had negotiated their full statehood earlier 'lost' the major political issue of independence as a point of conflict. The second, more obvious, point is that these states also had an earlier start than Belize at experimenting with clientelist party politics in a context of enjoying full political control over all the institutions of resource allocation.

Different experiences across the region in relation to the role of political ideology in the development of party politics also affected the trajectory of clientelism. It was argued for Belize that the diminishing (and near total disappearance) of substantive differences between the PUP and the UDP after independence created a vacuum that was filled, in part, by distinctions based on the relative capacity to provide clientelist inducements. In this regard, Belize's post-independence experience is closer to that of states such as Barbados and the Bahamas, in which ideology has featured only marginally. However, Guyana, Grenada, and especially Jamaica provide interesting insights into how clientelism may play out in states in which ideological distinctions between parties feature for some time. This was the case in Jamaica from 1972 to 1989, when the People's National Party (PNP) under Michael Manley (1972-1980),



presented a distinctly democratic socialist vision, in contrast to the pro-laissez-faire Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) under Edward Seaga (1980-1989). After observing the PNP in power during its first term, Stone (1980: 95) argued that, "Shifts in policy issues and ideological directions...do not affect the dominant base of mass [clientelist] support unless these changes are associated with perceived increases or decreases in the capability to deliver material and social rewards." Edie (1989, 1994b) drew similar conclusions. Using examples of housing and employment programmes, Sives (2002: 75-77) confirmed the findings of Stone and Edie that clientelist politics persisted and actually expanded during Manley's first term.

The key implication here is that competitive-party clientelism may have already been so entrenched and systemic in Jamaica's modern politics that party distinctions based on ideology were insufficient to mitigate its rise. Against a backdrop of intense clientelism, Sives (2010: 78) contended that ideological distinctions merely added a new dimension of political conflict between supporters of the PNP and the JLP. As such, it appears that 'wearing' the PNP ideological label improved one's chances of receiving material and other inducements. Indeed, there is little evidence that the PNP viewed clientelism as a significant problem to be dealt with as part of its 'socialist' platform. Clientelist practices continued under Seaga's JLP when the party was returned to power in 1980. Whereas Grenada's experiment with socialism under the NJM was too short-lived to provide much comparative insight, clientelism flourished under the long rule of the PNC during the experiment with 'co-operative socialism' in Guyana (Thomas, 1983: 47, Garner, 2008: 163, Quinn, 2005: 119). Although some would argue that socialism in the region was more rhetorical than real, the region's experience reinforces the point that party-based clientelism, in a competitive electoral context, often transcends ideological platforms.

Overall, then, while not excluding the relevance of socio-economic inequality as a common causal variable, it is the type of competitive politics practiced in the small-state context of the Caribbean's version of Westminster parliamentary democracy that is at the heart of clientelist politics in the region. Lyday, O'Donnell and Munroe (2008) captured the essence of this argument succinctly:

Formal two-party democracy [deteriorated] into a collusive, cartel-based 'gentleman's agreement' form of political party contestation. Over time, differences between parties become much more pronounced in personality and organisational culture than they do in terms of ideology and policy. This greatly disposes an otherwise competitive political system to act in clientelist ways, reinforcing, rather than undermining patronage and collusion...A Westminster-style winner-take-all political system strengthens a two-party system, which works to the advantage of an already developed economy and society, but entrenches political patronage and clientelism in an emerging one (Lyday, et al., 2008: 3-4).

### ***On Poverty and Economic Policies***

There have been few studies of the relationship between social vulnerabilities and political clientelism in the Commonwealth Caribbean. What is known is that poverty and inequality, identified as basic supporting conditions for the spread of clientelism in Belize, have generally persisted or expanded in most states across the region since their independence (United Nations Development Programme, 2012). However, a variety of national and international reports and databases show that poverty and human development levels have varied across the region's states for most of the past decade. Generally, national poverty rates (measured as the percentage of persons below national poverty lines) are lower in Barbados, Antigua and Barbuda and the Bahamas, higher in Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, Trinidad and Tobago, St. Lucia and Dominica, and highest in Belize, Guyana, Grenada and St. Vincent and Grenadines.<sup>544</sup> However, few studies have explored specific relationships of poverty to clientelism. One finding on Belize that is observable in a few other states in the region is that of the added propensity for clientelism in poor, densely populated urban constituencies, such as in Belize City. For example, one of Gray's (2004) core arguments has been that high rates of poverty in urban Kingston (Jamaica) have facilitated the entrenchment of clientelism as an alternative survival strategy for many. Ryan et al. (1997) had similar findings for a poor urban constituency in Port of Spain, Trinidad.

The previously discussed differences in the prevalence of clientelism in Barbados, Jamaica and Belize do raise the question of whether differences in poverty rates are part of the explanation. Barbados, which had the highest

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<sup>544</sup> This assessment is made on the basis of poverty figures from a variety of sources, including R. Henry (2001), World Development Indicators (<http://data.worldbank.org/news/world-development-indicators-2012-update>) and comparative poverty data from the Barbados poverty report (Government of Barbados, 2011: 23).

gross national income (GNI) per head (US\$12,660<sup>545</sup> in 2009) and the highest global Human Development Index (HDI) rank (47 in 2011) in the region, had a 2010 poverty rate of 19.3 per cent (Government of Barbados, 2011: 23). Jamaica, which had a much lower GNI per head (US\$4,980 in 2009) and a lower HDI rank (79 in 2011), reported a poverty rate of 16.5 per cent and 17.6 per cent for 2009 and 2010, respectively (World Bank, 2013). Belize's GNI per head was the lowest among the three at US\$3,690 in 2009, its HDI rank was worse at 93 in 2011, and its poverty rate highest at 41.3 per cent in 2009. Overall, these figures suggest that although Barbados' lower prevalence of political clientelism may bear some relation to its positive socio-economic and human development performance, other factors are also at play. Indeed, other national and cross-national studies of clientelism are needed to inform a deeper comparative analysis of the poverty/clientelism relationship in the region.

Apart from the few short-lived attempts at 'progressive' alternatives cited (Jamaica, Grenada and Guyana), most states in the region, like Belize, have embraced neoliberal economic policies since the 1980s and 1990s. Several studies argue that, directly or indirectly, neoliberal policies have contributed to the perpetuation of skewed societal benefits and increased income inequality in the region. For example, Huber (1993: 81) found that, in states with high income inequality and poverty, neoliberal policies "have highly inegalitarian distributional consequences." The finding that the competition to attract foreign investment, inherent to neoliberalism, has become a key additional source of private funding for clientelist operations is not limited to Belize. This link is made strongly in Edie's study on Jamaica. Edie (1991: 115-145) argued that the embrace of neoliberalism by the JLP in the 1980s expanded opportunities for local patrons to source funds to oil the wheels of clientelism through financial flows to official government programmes and private donations from foreign investors. These funds helped to fill public spending shortfalls that occurred during the latter part of the Manley years. However, she also demonstrated that

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<sup>545</sup> GNI figures are from the World Development Indicators and HDI figures from UNDP (United Nations Development Programme, 2011).

such opportunities for funding clientelist activities diminished in times of reduced capital inflow and economic downturn.<sup>546</sup>

It was observed in the Belize case that although political clientelism has been on a continuous upwards trajectory since 1981, macro-economic hardships (such as in those in 1984 and 2008) have occasionally limited governments' capacities to use certain public resources as clientelist inducements. Several studies on Jamaica draw a link between the relative prevalence of political clientelism and macro-economic changes related to the relative performance of neoliberal policies over time. The general argument is that party-based clientelism expanded in Jamaica in the post-independence period (after 1962) up to the 1980s, when there was a tapering off, if not a decline. This alleged decrease is generally attributed to the economic crunch and the structural adjustment medicine dished out by the IMF in the 1980s (e.g., Edie, 1991; Sives, 2010; Clarke, 2006). As Clarke (2006: 431) explained in relation to the belt-tightening policies, "As the state has withered away, so the capacity of politicians, and especially those in government, to offer patronage to their followers has declined." Similarly, Huber Stephens (1986: 212-213) had found that economic hardships (caused, in part, by the IMF agreed measures) also led to the loss of privileges for the middle class—which in turn contributed to the PNP's defeat in 1980.

However, even if the prevalence of party-based clientelism in Jamaica did moderate in the 1980s and 1990s, it has remained a dominant feature of Jamaican political relations. Sives (2010: 132) argued that "in the context of declining state resources, both political parties have sought to maintain the patron-client relationship." Gayle's 2011 finding that one-third of Jamaicans experience vote buying supports this. As in Belize, party-based political clientelism in Jamaica adapted to new economic and political realities and found alternative ways to thrive in periods when the state had less capacity to deliver resources. For instance, Clarke (2006: 431-432) argued that "the shifting of some government resources directly to members of parliament has also given added life to clientelism in Kingston's politics through the 1980s and 1990s."

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<sup>546</sup> The same decreased ability to dispense state patronage transpired in 'co-operative socialist' Guyana in the 1980s as its economy stagnated and after IMF structural adjustment was agreed.

Apart from the identification of alternative financial sources for handouts during cyclical downturns, there are also non-economic explanations for the persistence of clientelist relationships in Jamaica. For example, Sives (2010: 118) argued that party loyalties survive during periods of low resource availability because there is also a ‘non-economic’ benefit from being associated with the PNP or JLP—a sort of intangible sense of belonging. Indeed, Stone (1980), Edie (1989, 1991, 1994) and Sives (2002, 2010) all demonstrated that the provision of personal security has been in high demand by clients in periods of extensive party-linked violence in urban Jamaica. Sives (2002: 82) went further and contended that such non-economic benefits help “explain why [clientelist] relations have fractured rather than broken down completely” when economic resources diminish. Although the Belize findings do not dispute that there is a non-economic benefit to some clientelist relationships,<sup>547</sup> it is worth noting that the end result of such associations with a particular political party is often the ability to enjoy greater access to the material resources that are, or could be, on offer.

***On Country-Contextual Variables: Demography, Culture and Small Size***

In relation to the country-specific variables explored for the Belize case, interesting comparative insights emerge. The findings on the relationship between ethnicity and clientelism in Belize are particularly unique when compared to other multi-ethnic states in the region. In Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, dominant and competing ethnic-based political parties have employed clientelism as a tool to achieve and maintain the political support of the Afro- or Indo-descent populations.<sup>548</sup> Once ethnic politics became established in both states, incumbent parties favoured and maintained ethnic supporters of all classes by preferential distribution of material and other inducements. Ethnic-based favouritism and victimisation, or the perception thereof, are therefore

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<sup>547</sup> For example, Shoman noted that not belonging to a party is to be ignored (Interview with Shoman).

<sup>548</sup> The 2002 census in Guyana indicated that there were 43.5 per cent Indo-Guyanese, 30.2 per cent Afro-Guyanese, 16.7 per cent Mixed and 9.2 per cent Amerindian (Caribbean Community, 2002: 27). For Trinidad and Tobago, the 2000 census recorded that the ethnic breakdown of East Indian and African descendants was 40 per cent and 37.5 per cent, respectively, and that 20.5 per cent were of mixed heritage (Caribbean Community, 2009: 27).

ever-present sources of political tension in these states.<sup>549</sup> In the case of Guyana, the PNC (with majority support from Afro-Guyanese) governed from 1968 to 1992 and the PPP (with majority support from Indo-Guyanese) has governed since.<sup>550</sup> Trinidad and Tobago has had a similar pattern with the Afro-dominant People's National Movement (PNM) and the Indo-dominant United National Congress (UNC),<sup>551</sup> broken by a short-lived Afro-Indo coalition party from 1986 to 1991.<sup>552</sup> As with most political relationships in states with diverse ethnicity, those related to political clientelism are complex, and there are significant differences in how they play out in these two states. Also, in both states, ethnic-based clientelism is not omnipresent but a matter of degree. For example, as Garner (2008: 282-285) illustrated for Guyana under Burnham (1968-1992), although the PNC favoured Afro-Guyanese in the dispensing of state patronage, it also minimised opposition through strategic clientelist inducements to elite Indo-Guyanese.

Unlike Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago, Belize's modern politics did not produce ethnic-based parties that overtly favoured one ethnic group over another. However, although ethnicity was not as significant a variable for the nature of clientelism in Belize as it was in these two other states, it did facilitate its expansion and colour its manifestations. As illustrated, existing ethnic relationships and linkages, in particular ethnic-majority constituencies, provided politicians with ready-made communications and distribution networks. Belizean politicians in multi-ethnic constituencies need to ensure that there is no perception that an ethnic group is favoured over another. Indeed, the lack of visible clientelist discrimination based on ethnicity, or at least the perception thereof, may have itself contributed to the perpetuation of ethnically-integrated political parties. In effect, the Belize case is unique, at least in the region, in showing that ethnic-party clientelism is not the only outcome in multi-ethnic societies.

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<sup>549</sup> It is important to note that the perception of the extent of ethnic bias in the distribution of state resources is often higher than the reality, but perceptions do matter.

<sup>550</sup> For useful discussions of ethnic politics in Guyana, see Premdas (2007), Ryan (1999: 143-180), Ifill (2008) and Singh (2003).

<sup>551</sup> The UNC was preceded by other Indo-based parties prior to its formation in 1989.

<sup>552</sup> For useful discussions of ethnic politics in Trinidad and Tobago, see Ryan (1991, 1999; 1988) and Hintzen (1983).

Although not to the extent demonstrated for Belize, there are indications that immigration is becoming a factor in the manifestations of political clientelism in the region. Using 2005 United Nations population data, Belize's 15.3 per cent foreign-born population was second highest in the region, next to Antigua and Barbuda (22.1 per cent) and above third-ranking Bahamas (10 per cent).<sup>553</sup> Antigua and Barbuda has had a history of immigration from the Dominican Republic and more recently from other Caribbean Community (CARICOM) countries such as Guyana and Dominica. In the case of the Bahamas, some tens of thousands of Haitians are estimated to be among the 350,000 population, with most having arrived since the fall of the Duvalier regime in 1980s.<sup>554</sup> Although there has been no research directly on the relationship between clientelism and immigrant population in these states, recent newspaper reports suggest some possible connection. In the Bahamas, for example, the Free National Movement (FNM), the losing incumbent party in the 2012 general elections, accused the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) of vote buying in poor Haitian-Bahamian communities in an attempt to decrease the FNM's traditional advantage with this growing voting group.<sup>555</sup> After the election, the victorious PLP levelled the same clientelist charge at the FNM.<sup>556</sup> The Belize case certainly suggests that, in a competitive-party clientelist context, the targeting of newer, and usually poorer, immigrant voters by political parties would not be uncommon. In Belize, both the PUP and UDP have targeted new Central American immigrants as clients in near equal measure, just as they have every other demographic group.

In relation to the Belize finding that aspects of political culture may play a role in explaining the rapid spread of political clientelism, the available information on the region is also inconclusive. At the broader level, most studies have pointed to the region's common political-cultural history of British colonialism, which evolved into Westminster governance, as conducive to the development of democracy. Griffin (1997: 36), for example, contended that "because of this

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<sup>553</sup>Based on UN World Population Policies data from 2005 as retrieved from: [http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/imm\\_imm\\_pop\\_imm\\_as\\_per\\_of\\_sta\\_pop-immigrant-population-immigrants-percentage-state](http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/imm_imm_pop_imm_as_per_of_sta_pop-immigrant-population-immigrants-percentage-state).

<sup>554</sup> Bahamas Outlook Clouds for Haitians. (2009, September 20). *BBC News Channel*.

<sup>555</sup> Bahamas PM Raises Vote buying Concerns. (2012, May 4). *Caribbean News Now*, and Bell Says He Witnessed FNM Vote buying. (2012, June 5). *Nassau Guardian*.

<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

lengthy process of socialisation by which they have become habituated to democracy, Anglophone Caribbean countries are structurally and culturally disposed to consolidate the democratic process.” Others have also singled out the affinity for personalised politics and populist leaders. Only a few national-level studies have made linkages between clientelism and political culture. For Jamaica, Stone (1980: 109) argued that “underlying these clientelist structures are political values which show deep respect for the effective exercise of power, and place access to patronage benefits above the importance of citizens’ rights, while accepting asymmetric and elitist power and authority relations as necessary to maintain the central institutions of government.”

Although the role of small-state scale in the expansion of political clientelism is acknowledged in the few studies of clientelism in the region, the Belize findings suggest that insufficient emphasis has been given to the ‘accelerator effect’ of small size. Key here is the degree to which clientelism, and particularly vote buying, is more attractive and effective when only a small number of voters need to be induced to make a difference in constituency elections. For this reason, it would be interesting to explore whether the smallest states of the region, such as St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Dominica and Grenada, exhibit greater levels of clientelism and/or significantly different manifestations of the phenomenon. As microcosms of universal political behaviours, the Belize findings strongly suggest that the small states of the Commonwealth Caribbean can indeed provide insights into how clientelism affects democracy and development in developing states generally.

### ***Comparative Insights on Implications for Democracy***

The Belize case is distinct among extant studies of Commonwealth Caribbean politics in its attempt to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the national implications of entrenched political clientelism for an emerging democratic state. The few published assessments of the implications of clientelism in the region are parts of general discussions about democratic decay, political corruption, political conflict or ethnic politics. Additionally, the available studies on the subject have the same bias as the wider literature in the sense that they focus research attention more on the dyadic, constituency-level implications and less so on collective national impact. How do the Belize findings on the implications



of clientelism for formal, participatory and social democracy compare to available information on the region's other states?

As noted previously, the positive democratic record of the Commonwealth Caribbean is mostly due to exemplary performance in the area of formal democracy. As for Belize, however, this positive record belies serious underlying questions about formal democracy in light of rampant political clientelism. In particular, the questions raised by the Belize case about the meaning of the vote and of elections in a context of high levels of clientelism also have salience in the rest of the region. Michael Manley, who had one of the best seats in the House (1972-1980) from which to observe the operations of clientelism in the region, pinpointed some of these concerns well:

[T]he act of political choice involves the casting of a vote which is not commitment of the self to an activity. Instead, it is an act which expresses the expectation of a benefit, which will somehow come in spite of oneself, through the effort of a faceless authority known as the government. In due course, the expected package of benefits will be insufficiently realised. It will not occur to the voter that this may partly be the result of their own lack of involvement. However, it will be enough to guarantee that a rival set of promises will get the nod next time (Manley, 1987: 268-269).

In the Jamaica of the pre-independence period, when Manley's father, Norman Manley, was the leader of the PNP and served as chief minister (1955 to 1962), voting in elections did involve commitment to a cause or to a personality, as much as it did in the pre-independence period in Belize and in other states in the region. However, by the 1990s, and except for the notable instances of ideological distinctions discussed above, governance assessments were increasingly pointing to elections as being contests between or among parties that had but minor differences. As such, parties have used their relative ability to deliver clientelist inducements as one point of differentiation. Although the extent of this lack of partisan difference varies temporally and by state, the buying of votes in small constituencies casts a cloud over electoral democracy and the concept of free and fair elections across the region. As in Belize, it is problematic to dub an election result as totally free and fair when a large portion of the electorate is engaging in clientelist politics in states with such tiny populations.

There is, moreover, some evidence that the concerns raised in the Belize case about the meaning of voter turnout figures and about the secrecy of the vote also have relevance in most of the region's states. Schraufnagel and Sgnouraki (2006), in a quantitative analysis of voter turnout trends in the Commonwealth Caribbean, included clientelism as one of several independent variables. Their findings (2006: 18) suggested that there is a direct positive relationship between the extent of clientelist politics and voter turnout, and that this transpires more in states with fewer political parties competing. Although the study did not assess the specific relationship between negative vote buying and lower voter turnout, it is highly unlikely that this practice is limited to Belize. Even though there have been examples of outright election rigging,<sup>557</sup> the vast majority of elections in the region have generally tended to be free from direct vote tampering. Yet the concerns expressed about ballot secrecy in Belize are not unique.

For example, until halted by electoral reform in the past decade, the 'golden ballot'<sup>558</sup> in Jamaica—which allowed parties to pay voters to switch ballots in the voting booth—was widely reported (The Carter Center, 2003: 56). The practice of taking photos of ballots with cell phones to prove that one voted as promised seems to transpire in other states across the region. For instance, former prime minister of the Bahamas, Hubert Ingraham, charged that the opposition party was planning to use cell phones to assist in vote buying, and the opposition leader, Perry Christie, responded with similar claims (Cartwright-Carroll, 2012: 1). The Belize case illustrates how this lack of ballot secrecy, or the perception thereof, runs counter to Dahl's principle of equal consideration of interests and opens the door to individualised discrimination in the distribution of resources. The related issue of the abuse of voter registration processes and voting lists through clientelism also resonates outside of Belize. This was the case, for instance, in the 2003 Grenada election in which there were numerous allegations of manipulating the voters' list in favour of the incumbent party, prompting the OAS Electoral Mission to warn that the "key to people's trust in

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<sup>557</sup> For example, it is fairly well-established that the PNC under Burnham rigged elections through manipulation of voters' lists, ballot box stuffing and other acts of ballot tampering to maintain power. See, for example, Ifill (2008) and Ryan (1994: 240).

<sup>558</sup> A voter is given a false ballot before entering the voting booth. This is swapped with an official ballot, which is given to party affiliates. Once the X is put in right place, the official ballot is given to another voter to place in the ballot box. This voter brings out another blank official ballot and the process continues.

the elections is public acceptance of the voters' list. This is central to democracy" (Quoted in Grenade, 2004: 9).

As for Belize, entrenched political clientelism has resulted in a general trend of political parties being defined more by their relative capacity to deliver clientelist inducements than by any other trait. This shift from programmatic and more ideologically distinct parties to more clientelist parties appears to parallel the trajectory of other political parties in the region. For example, in a comparative piece on Caribbean political parties, Ryan (2004: 2) pointed to the overall decrease in the membership base of political parties and the general move away from union alliances due, in part, to the failure of parties to maintain support based on substantive policy achievements. Although Ryan persuasively related this disassociation to the fallout from neoliberal policies, the Belize case suggests that party membership and union alliances decreased in importance partly because of the success of constituency-based clientelist networks. Moreover, as in Belize, high levels of manipulation of state programmes and services for clientelist purposes have blurred lines between public and party resources across the region (Organisation of American States, 2005: 19).

In terms of the findings on participation beyond elections, the Belize experience of the impact of clientelism also resonates across much of the region. In their study of elections between 1994 and 2005, Barrow-Giles and Tennyson (2006: 158-159) found that the costs of financing elections limits the participation of third parties and of women. In particular, the Belize finding on the changing role of constituency representatives rings true. Much more than members of parliament (MPs) in the United Kingdom or in other developed states that have Westminster parliamentary systems, MPs in 'Caribbeanised' Westminster systems are primary focal points for constituents to engage the state for individualised resources. Just 12 years after Jamaican independence, Michael Manley made this insightful observation about the evolving function of Caribbean MPs:

[T]hey [MPs] tend to be under constant pressure to distribute favours not only to members of organizations, but also to supporters in the widest sense. In the Jamaican political system, which is based on geographical constituencies and is in other respects a fair approximation of the Westminster model, the Member of Parliament and, consequently, the constituency organisation becomes inextricably involved in things like provision of jobs, the distribution of houses, pressure for water supplies, streetlights and

sidewalks, and indeed all the basic elements of the patterns of felt needs (Manley, 1974: 168).

As in Belize, many citizens across the region have come to view their MPs as the providers of personalised handouts and favours. In Gray's (2004: 37-40) analysis of clientelist relationships in poor areas of Kingston, a central argument is that the poor understand that this manner of engaging politicians does work in meeting needs, and that they have power in the relationship. Reflecting on the Jamaica MP experience, Baker (2009: 1-3) argued that this mode of participation becomes understandable in the context of an ineffective public service and lack of private sector opportunities. She proposed a constitutional rethink of the role of MPs that goes beyond that of legislators and that accepts a formal constituency-development function. However, because Baker accepts that clientelism is destructive in the long term, she suggested consideration of a community development approach akin to the SHIE experience in Belize. Indeed, the SHIE should be considered a model on which to base similar pilots both in Belize and the rest of the region. The important point here is that entrenched clientelist politics has significantly transformed the relationship between elected representatives and constituents in Caribbean parliamentary democracies.

The spread of homogenous voting to more constituencies in Belize, due in large part to political clientelism, has long been evident in urban Jamaica. For example, Figueroa and Sives (2002: 83) pointed out that in the 1993 election, in one urban Kingston constituency 48 per cent of ballot boxes had no votes for the losing candidate, and in another the figure was 98 per cent. They related this voting pattern to the development of 'garrison' communities. Several studies have demonstrated how these garrisons evolved as a result of both individualised and communal clientelism, as governing political parties favoured their supporters in the distribution of public housing.<sup>559</sup> Over time, several of these exclusive party-based garrison communities became no-go zones for supporters of the other party.

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<sup>559</sup> In addition to the works of Figueroa and Sives, see also the study of the August Town garrison community by Charles (2004).

As Sives (2002, 2010) convincingly demonstrated, it was these garrison communities that spawned much of Jamaica's well-known reputation for partisan political violence in the 1980s and 1990s. For this reason, Sives (2002: 66) pinpointed party-based clientelism as one of the major contributors to Jamaica's post-independence experience with political violence. In short, once clientelism was entrenched, and with the encouragement of the PNP and the JLP, supporters used violence to protect the resources they had received and to maintain clientelist flows. Sives (2010: 131-132) argued that such party-based violence subsided in the 1990s largely because of the relative decrease in party-based clientelism related to the 'shrinking' of the state. However, Sives (2010: 133-140) also demonstrated how this vacuum was partly filled by drug dons supporting and, in some cases, replacing politicians as patrons in certain urban constituencies.<sup>560</sup> Consequently, the rise of drug-gang violence in garrison communities can be directly traced back to the origins of party-based clientelism in post-independence Jamaica (Sives, 2010; Clarke, 2006).<sup>561</sup>

Although the Jamaican experience with political violence is unusual in the region, it is not unique. The Belize case suggests that the phenomenon of drug dons supporting a particular politician at the constituency level may be emerging. As several observers argue, the infiltration of drug money into party politics for campaigns and clientelist operations is also identifiable in the Eastern Caribbean since the 1990s (Tennyson, 2010).<sup>562</sup> In effect, this suggests the emergence of a 'new' variant of 'drug-don' clientelism alongside competitive party clientelism. As Sives (2010: 118) contended, it is one of "the ways in which clientelist patterns and partisan identity have been restructured following the adoption of neoliberal policies in the 1980s and 1990s." It is also one additional illustration of both the adaptive and opportunistic nature of clientelism.

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<sup>560</sup> One of the most notorious examples of this phenomenon took place in 2010 in Tivoli Gardens (a housing project established by the JLP in West Kingston in the 1960s). Christopher 'Dudus' Coke, a drug don, had established himself as the dominant patron in the community. When Prime Minister Bruce Golding used the police to detain Dudus for extradition to the United States, it resulted in an unprecedented violent episode that left more than 70 people killed (Jamaica Security Forces Storms 'Drugs Lord' Stronghold. (2010, May 25). *BBC News Channel*). Numerous observers have traced the origins of this violence to clientelist politics.

<sup>561</sup> Recent anthropological research by Jaffe (2011) has further illustrated how dons and their gangs function much like the state for some citizens in poor Kingston communities—changing the concept of citizenship in the process.

<sup>562</sup> See also Ryan (1999: 328-330) for discussion of political violence and the drug trade in the region.

What of comparative insights on the impact of entrenched clientelism on social democracy? As in the case of Belize, across the region clientelist politics provide some distributive benefits to citizens in the context of high levels of poverty and ineffective public welfare systems.<sup>563</sup> Indeed, a significant number of Caribbeanists, although acknowledging negative impacts, have argued that this distributive function of political clientelism has contributed to sustaining formal and liberal democracy in the region. For example, Stone (1980: 103) argued that “clientelism undermines the propensity for open-class antagonisms.” Duncan and Woods (2007: 211) contended that clientelism helps to explain the longevity of democracy in the Commonwealth Caribbean because it has “contributed to the development of a redistributive political culture that has helped Caribbean governments mitigate poverty and social exclusion.” Likewise, Domínguez (1993: 12-14) argued that clientelism is “inherently distributive” and has benefited poor people with resources as well as elites with political power and economic opportunities. This, he suggested, leads to a political equilibrium he termed ‘the statist bargain’, which in turn conserves the status quo of formal democracy. In the case of Jamaica, Edie (1991: 7) stated that clientelism “prevents authoritarianism by dispensing resources” and that “democracy, as a result, survives by default.” The implicit assumption of these arguments is that if the informal distributive benefits of political clientelism were to somehow disappear, then formal democracy stability would be severely threatened.

The Belize case does indeed suggest that, in a context of increasing poverty and inequality, political clientelism has played an ‘escape valve’ function that contributes to the meeting of social needs for some. However, the ‘preserving democracy’ argument exaggerates the relative contributions of clientelism to political stability in the wider context of substantive democracy. First of all, although highly significant and sometimes dominant, clientelism is but one of several ‘escape valves’ for the potential conflict that could erupt from unmet social needs. Others include emigration, remittances, civil society interventions and effective public sector programmes. Secondly, the ‘preserving democracy’ argument appears to overstate the distributive benefit function itself. The Belize

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<sup>563</sup> See, for example, Gray (2004) for Jamaica and Ryan et al. (1997) for Trinidad and Tobago.

case has demonstrated that the benefits that accrue are overwhelmingly short-term in nature and not based on known standards of merit. Although the poor can sometimes be empowered collectively by the successes of their clientelist negotiations for resources, the systemic causes of the inequality that breeds clientelism remain entrenched even longer. Thirdly, the Belize case suggests that the longer-term, aggregate consequences of entrenched clientelism are more damaging than they are sustaining to democracy in the region's states.

The following assessments imply that many of the concerns expressed for Belize obtain in the most of rest of the Commonwealth Caribbean.

It [clientelism in Jamaica] promotes personalised authority and therefore weak, non-autonomous and partially bureaucratised institutions. It encourages low levels of accountability in political institutions and high concentrations of personal power...It presents intimidating obstacles that stifle the free flow of public debate and discourages independent individual and group participation in public life (Stone, 1980: 109).

Positive resources...have passed...to supporters via the patronage machine [in Antigua and Barbuda]. At the same time, negative resources such as the state's ability to repress, to fire, to deny civil rights, to weaken unions, etc., have passed to opponents through the victimisation machine (Henry, 1991: 26).

Whenever elections herald changeovers of power [in the Caribbean], the incoming party generally rewards its supporters with civil service positions or government procurement contracts, with the result that bureaucratic neutrality cannot be assured and neither can the effectiveness of the state apparatus...Even where patronage is not explicit, longer-term developmental objectives regularly give way to short-termism (Bishop, 2011: 427).

Although corruption has been a major issue of concern in the region over the past decade, precious few studies and reports make more than a superficial link to political clientelism.<sup>564</sup> This is perhaps related to the extent to which political clientelism is seen by many as just another element of the political culture of the region. One report that made the link clearly is a 2008 assessment of corruption in Jamaica:

Jamaican corruption has managed to develop in ways that permitted extended networks of diverse elites, together with certain elements of the mass public, to share major benefits among themselves while staving off political and economic competitors. The costs of such a Faustian bargain, however, were played out in terms of violence and the increasing degradation of non-partisan state power (Lyday, et al., 2008: 6-7).

In addition to pinpointing entrenched party-based patronage and clientelism as a core cause of the high levels of corruption in Jamaica, the report observed

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<sup>564</sup> For example, a CARICOM paper (Nazario, 2007) on developing an anti-corruption strategy for the region made no mention of clientelism, patronage or vote buying in its discussion of causes.

that people do not view themselves as part of the problem. Indeed, the report suggested that Stone's (1980: 101) finding that clients look away when rules are broken by patrons, as long as they keep receiving benefits, still pertains. These linkages are not limited to Jamaica and Belize.

As in the Belize case, the expanding monetary costs of politicians setting up ever-larger clientelist operations have resulted in politicians and political parties becoming increasingly more creative and reckless in accessing resources. The usual narrative across the region is that of incumbent parties devising ever-more creative schemes to tap into public funds, including international loans and grants, for use as clientelist inducements. A common example concerns the abuse of the 'constituency fund', as was demonstrated in Belize. In Jamaica, the roles of MP as primary problem-solver and welfare agent had become so established by 1985 that former prime minister Edward Seaga acted to formalise aspects of these roles by launching the Local Development Programme, which provided monies for direct transfer to MPs "so that an MP can exercise his own discretion as how he determines these funds should be employed" (Quoted in Edie, 1989: 26). By 2008, the new version of this programme, called the Constituency Development Fund, was circa 2.5 per cent of the national budget (Lyday, et al., 2008: 7), and in 2011, Jamaican MPs were receiving JA\$20,000,000 per year (circa US\$225,000) for direct constituency spending, with no requirement for needs assessments or accounting (Spaulding, 2010: 1). Over time, some form of constituency funding for MPs has been similarly legitimised throughout several states in the region. As Lyday et al. (2008: 7) contended for Jamaica, "In practice, it serves as a powerful backbone for maintaining the patronage system of [both] political parties."

With regard to the disincentive effect that entrenched clientelism has on policy and reform processes, the Belize experience also has parallels elsewhere in the region. Edie (1989: 27) argued that neither politicians nor clients in Jamaica have problems with new policies or programmes—such as the constituency development fund—that give people resources even when they are openly clientelist in nature. However, policies that are perceived to threaten access to giving and receiving clientelist inducements generally find little support. One



clear example that can be identified is that of region-wide failure to develop and implement campaign finance reforms. As the overall costs of electoral politics have expanded due to the high costs of elections and clientelist operations, and as the corrupting consequences of private donations become clearer, the imperative for regulation is hard to dispute. Yet, as is the case in Belize, the situation relating to disclosure and regulating of financing for political parties is dismal across the region.<sup>565</sup>

As an OAS report (2005: 25) on political parties found, “With regard to political financing, the Caribbean is one of the least transparent regions in the world.” Various regional studies, including Griner (2005), Griner and Zovatto (2005) and Pinto-Duschinsky (2001), have pointed to weak or non-existent regulation of political parties and their financing. Ryan (2005: 33-35), in a regional comparison of campaign finance practices, showed that only five of the 12 independent Caribbean states have some kind of candidate disclosure legislation, and only in Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago is there an attempt at enforcement. Overall, there has been no requirement for party disclosure and no limits on the sizes of contributions, and of the four states that have spending limits, only Barbados has some degree of enforcement. This situation has continued even as the costs of campaigns continue to skyrocket, sources of funding are increasingly private and numerous allegations of clientelism-related corruption have arisen. However, as Ryan (2005: 39) concluded, neither governments nor the general public seem genuinely interested in proposals for the enactment of party and campaign finance legislation.

Albeit limited by the comparative information, this introductory impact analysis, centred on the Belize findings, indicates that the implications of entrenched political clientelism for Commonwealth Caribbean democracy are too troubling to ignore. Indeed, as in Belize, it seems likely that clientelism has played a significant, and largely deleterious, role in the modern political history of the region’s states. It is an issue that merits more research and policy attention—if

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<sup>565</sup> With regard to the regulation of political parties, Belize is one of only three states in the region (the others being Grenada and Dominica) in which there is no legal requirement for the registration of parties (Barrow-Giles, 2006: 151).

only because the modern politics of the region cannot be fully comprehended without better understanding the causes and implications of political clientelism.

## **Lessons, Contributions and Prospects for Change**

### ***Lessons and Contributions***

In examining the modern politics of Belize through the lens of political clientelism, a primary goal of this thesis has been to expand Belize's recent political historiography by deepening the analysis of the relative significance of this informal, often disreputable, political institution. Beyond this, however, the comparative analysis of the Belize findings in the Commonwealth Caribbean context indicates how this thesis also makes contributions to the scholarship on clientelist politics in a specific set of states. In highlighting the more salient of findings, it is also useful to discuss briefly what broader lessons there may be in the Belize case for political clientelism as an analytic construct, and what the future may hold for Belize as a clientelist democracy.

From its emergence in the nascent period of political party development in the 1950s to its full consolidation as an entrenched feature of political relationships and political culture by 2011, the role of political clientelism in the modern politics of Belize has either been ignored or understated. This is due, in no small part, to the informal, sub rosa and, often, illegal nature of political clientelism itself and to the challenges of researching it in a small society, where many see it as just normal behaviour. Yet this thesis has demonstrated that the narrative of modern politics in Belize cannot be limited to developments in formal political institutions. This narrative is incomplete without the record of the myriad informal relationships and multi-layered linkages that comprise political clientelism, through which a growing portion of Belizeans—across class, gender and ethnicity—engage with their politicians and governments on a daily basis. It is also incomplete without a chronicle of both the dyadic and macro-political implications that entrenched political clientelism has had for Belize's democracy and development.

In essence, this thesis has detailed the story of how, in the short 30 years of the post-independence experience with democracy, political clientelism has evolved

into such a big game for small Belize that its claim of being a “democratic state of Central America in the Caribbean region” (Constitution of Belize, Article 1.1) is being severely tested and tarnished. For the Belize of 2011, Stone’s (1980: 93) denotation of ‘clientelistic democratic state’ is arguably more fitting. In a very real sense, the expansion of clientelism is a symptom of the failure of democracy itself to progress to higher levels of social democracy. Documenting why clientelist politics emerged and expanded, how it operates, and its implications for Belizean society is important not only for filling gaps in the existing political narrative, but also because it contributes to understanding several challenges of political relations in Belize—for example, how the role of the constituency representative has changed, why so many citizens (across all income levels) prefer engaging with patron-politicians rather than government institutions, why some of these institutions are failing, how an informal welfare system has replaced much of the formal system, why politicians and governments shun longer-term programmatic reforms, how political corruption works and why structural poverty persists. Of the several major causes of these various societal challenges, this thesis has argued that political clientelism is among the more important ones.

As the only dedicated in-depth country case study of political clientelism in the Commonwealth Caribbean since Stone (1980) and Edie (1991) on Jamaica, this thesis illustrates that a national, interview-rich case study can add relevant insights to the body of knowledge on political clientelism and can provide useful opportunities for revisiting and advancing analysis of this phenomenon for this set of states. The comparative discussion of the Belize findings implies that, albeit with some unique contextual textures, clientelist democracy is more prevalent in states in the region (beyond Jamaica) than the paucity of dedicated studies may suggest. Importantly, commonalities in most of these national experiences give credence to a path-dependency perspective on the emergence and expansion of political clientelism, alongside the emergence and consolidation of party politics in the region. As in Belize, competitive party politics and high levels of institutional control within the Westminster model, ongoing poverty and inequality, and small size dominate in the region as causal explanations for the expansion of clientelist politics. Ethnicity and migration

have helped to determine the particular strategies of patrons and clients alike in several of the region's states. Although not indispensable for the emergence and expansion of clientelist politics, the personalities and actions of individual leaders—such as Belize's George Price, Jamaica's Michael Manley, Trinidad and Tobago's Eric Williams and Barbados' Errol Barrow—and the behaviour of particular political parties have been significant factors in explaining differences in the timing and in the textures of modern political clientelism in states across the region.

However, the Belize findings also contain several analytical and methodological insights for the study of political clientelism beyond the Commonwealth Caribbean and are consistent with some of the key arguments in the literature. Edie (1991: 53) was not far off the mark in arguing that clientelism, as an analytic concept, demonstrates “why and how the interests of the rich and poor manage to converge” in the democratic politics of some states. The Belize results confirm (as did Auyero (2001) for Argentina and Gray (2004) for Jamaica) that the politics of the poor often transpire more in informal relationships at the dyadic and community levels, than at the level of formal institutions of government. Even though those in higher income brackets also exchange political support for resources and favours, and some rich donors help to grease the wheels of clientelism, the electoral support of the poor and the middle class is the politician's key to the doors of political power. It was the competition for this support, in a context of weak substantive party distinctions that led the PUP, and then the UDP, to expand political clientelism. As the Belize case illustrates, however, this top-down conceptualisation of party-led clientelism is only part of the picture. There was a critical pivot point in the trajectory of clientelism in the late 1990s when the collective weight of citizen demand began to drive clientelist relationships from the bottom up, as much as the dangling of material inducements from above. This conclusion does not negate that poverty and inequality persist, or that the poor get the shorter end of the stick. Rather, the point is to emphasise that both politicians and clients have become politically dependent on the clientelist relationship. Reaching this stage of what might be denoted ‘mutual clientelist dependency’ should be treated as a

warning sign that political clientelism has reached dangerously high levels of entrenchment.

Although the implications of informal, clientelist relationships are not easy to measure, and so hardly register on balance-sheets of assessments of democracy, this thesis argues strongly that political clientelism studies must include macro-political impact analysis in order to become more relevant to the literature on democratisation. This is not to deny the value of studies on the implications for sub-national political units, such as constituencies and towns, or of studies that focus on specific relationships between clientelism and other variables, such as political violence or voter turnout. Belize's small size has facilitated both the research and the analysis of macro-implications for its democracy in a way that, say, Auyero would find difficult to do for Argentina. Moreover, the Belize findings also show that the constructs of 'clientelist democracy' (Stone, 1980) and 'patronage democracy' (Chandra, 2004) need conceptual refinement. Definitions cannot be limited simply to the high prevalence of clientelist and patronage practices in the formal institutions of a polity. It is equally important to consider the detrimental macro-political implications of political clientelism for democracy itself.

However damaging political clientelism can be for the quality of democracy and development in a developing state, the Belize case supports the findings of other studies showing that the day-to-day engagement of many citizens in clientelist exchanges can be justifiably construed as rational choices aimed at influencing the allocation of needed resources in their favour. As a bona fide informal mode of participation, clientelism does not appear as anti-democratic or immoral from the viewpoint of some clients, as it is for many scholars and proponents of formal democracy. For some, it is indeed a type of 'democracy'. Yet a central argument made by this thesis is that, in the long run, the prevalence of political clientelism witnessed in Belize is deleterious to the difficult process of improving the quality of democracy.

Indeed, among the primary research questions raised by this thesis is the extent to which the Belize findings on the macro-implications of entrenched clientelism pertain in other states in the Commonwealth Caribbean. Other national case

studies would be valuable in this regard, as would be studies on the rapidly changing role of elected representatives in 'Caribbeanised Westminster', the SHIE experience in Belize as a possible model for combating clientelism, the relationship between clientelism and Caribbean political culture, the extent to which 'publicly negotiated clientelism' exists in the region, the linkages between clientelism and political corruption, and the extent to which the Jamaican experience of clientelism and the drug trade pertains in the rest of the region. As a part of Central America, the Belize study also provides a logical basis from which to launch cross-systems (parliamentary vs. presidential) comparative studies of the manifestations and implications of political clientelism in the small states of the Commonwealth Caribbean and Central America.

### ***Poor Prospects for Change***

In his study detailing the negative consequences of the spread of party-based patronage in southern Belize, Moberg (1991: 230) pointedly asked what these communities would be like without clientelism. This raises the question of what might be the future of political clientelism in Belize. At the conceptual level, Clapham (1980: 8-14) outlined the logical prescription: diminishing the necessary conditions for political clientelism can result in the "decay of clientelism." At a minimum (assuming that party competition will remain high), this would entail decreasing poverty and inequality, improving resource allocation through the formal government welfare system and effective civil society interventions, enhancing party competition around non-clientelist distinctions and improving the regulatory environment. Indeed, decreases in blatant forms of clientelism in developed states, such as the United Kingdom and the United States, have been directly related to long-term improvements in economic opportunities and more effective enforcement of laws that regulate elections and politician-citizen relationships.<sup>566</sup> Thus far, however, this has not yet transpired in most recently democratised developing countries, and few countries have made comprehensive attempts aimed at addressing clientelism. Certainly, no concerted attempt has so far been made to arrest the prevalence

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<sup>566</sup> See Hansen (2000) for a useful summary of the historical experience with prohibiting and mitigating vote buying through electoral laws and institutions in the United States.

of political clientelism in Belize, and there is little evidence that this will transpire in the near future.<sup>567</sup>

This thesis' findings imply that, due to the deep entrenchment of clientelism in Belize's political system and political culture, reducing its prevalence is a gargantuan challenge. The essence of the problem is found in a penetrating question posed by that Belize City broker: "What will replace it?"<sup>568</sup> Critical barriers to change are further reflected in the pessimistic tenor of the vast majority of responses given by past and current politicians to the question of 'what to do' about clientelist politics. Most responses were akin to: "We can't do anything much, really. It's too far gone. It's now part of our culture,"<sup>569</sup> and "Neither the PUP nor UDP will stop because they would mess up the chances to win the next election."<sup>570</sup> So deeply held were some of these views that there were even suggestions to formalise some aspects of political clientelism into public institutions and the budgetary system. Assad Shoman, although agreeing that change will be exceedingly difficult and unlikely, offers radical ideological and systemic change (based on socialist principles) as the fix.<sup>571</sup> Shoman's ideological nemesis, Ralph Fonseca, who does not see much wrong with political clientelism itself, believes that it is more a matter of better management of constituents' expectations as funds available for 'benefits politics' fluctuate across normal economic twists and turns in the market.<sup>572</sup> Although differing radically on the 'how', both agree to one of the obvious prescriptions implied by this thesis: the need for more economic growth that leads to more economic opportunities (jobs) for more Belizeans. Another implication, which should be as obvious, is that there is likely much to learn from those citizens who choose not to engage in clientelism when they could.

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<sup>567</sup> The issue of open vote workers in the public service is a recent case in point. In its 2012 Party Manifesto, the UDP promised to "transition open vote workers into the permanent establishment" (United Democratic Party, 2012: 15). A Task Force was set up after the election to advise on this matter. The Task Force has determined that, due to levels of education of open vote workers, it will not be possible to assimilate most into the permanent establishment; but it may yet recommend a moratorium on future recruitment of open vote workers (Personal communication with McNab). It will be interesting to see how this issue plays out. Will an incumbent political party actually act on such advice?

<sup>568</sup> Interview with Broker Dan.

<sup>569</sup> Interview with Lindo.

<sup>570</sup> Interview with Leslie.

<sup>571</sup> Interview with Shoman.

<sup>572</sup> Interview with R. Fonseca.

However, the profound resignation that underlies the majority of these key actors' assessments reinforces several other findings of this thesis. Even though some politicians and citizens find clientelist politics distasteful and question its sustainability, there was no strong evidence to suggest that the PUP and UDP will soon begin to compete on the basis of more distinctive ideological and programmatic positions, and less on clientelism. Rather, the two parties have become trapped in a clientelist web largely of their own making. It is akin to a clientelist 'cold war', in which neither party will independently disarm its clientelist machine—even when both parties are aware that clientelist practices can be destructive and do not always ensure victory. This clientelist web has also trapped significant portions of Belize's population, especially those who survive on the informal welfare system of handouts. Nor is there any clear indication that the prognosis for poverty and inequality will improve, that effective alternatives to informal social assistance institutions will appear or that economic opportunities will expand significantly in the short term. Once institutionalised, mutual clientelist dependency between politicians and citizens is not easy to break.

It is not only as Rosberg (2005: 134) suggested, a problem of the "paradox of underdevelopment" in which "everybody wants the situation to be different, but nobody can afford to go first." Part of the difficulty is that too few politicians recognise and/or accept the situation as problematic and all believe and/or accept that the prevailing economic policy framework is the only alternative. Moreover, a significant proportion of Belizeans believe that handouts are now entitlements and/or that accepting them is rational when they believe their political leaders to be corrupt. Even if there were a concerted effort to curtail political clientelism, it would have to be based on a harsh reality suggested by this thesis: political clientelism has become a systemic problem for Belize that will require systemic solutions (and changes in power relationships) that go far beyond isolated institutional reforms. Attacking political clientelism institutionally will likely be ineffective if patrons maintain decision-making power over resources that clients need, and if the overall clientelist political framework is maintained (Chaves and Stoller, 2002: 10). The challenge is complicated even more by the fact that informal institutions, especially when they become a part



of political culture, are exceedingly difficult to alter (Lauth, 2002: 24). As the experience and aftermath of political reform efforts in Belize indicate, there is little political will in the country for the deeper kinds of governance reforms that could help to mitigate clientelism, such as campaign finance reform, strengthening the Elections and Boundaries Commission and curtailing discretionary spending and fee waivers. What does exist in large measure is widely-held cynicism that even such changes will make any difference.

Overall, and notwithstanding occasional and temporary dips in clientelism's trajectory, the findings of the thesis suggest that high levels of political clientelism will persist and remain a characteristic feature of political relations in Belize for the foreseeable future. When the impetus for change does come, two conclusions from the historic 2010 gathering of the foremost international scholars of political clientelism in Quito, Ecuador should be well heeded.<sup>573</sup> The first, which addresses the challenge of sustainability of some clientelist activities, is that "patron-client relationships are inherently unstable and perhaps may [for some countries] contain the seeds of their own destruction" (Network of Democracy Research Institutes, 2010: 6). The second acknowledges the sobering fact that political parties seldom initiate major change independently: "The solution cannot be left in the hands of the political system alone. Civil society has a role to play, and an important one" (Network of Democracy Research Institutes, 2010: 6). To inform further academic and public debate on these and other options, it is essential to connect the dots between the widespread, day-to-day practices of political clientelism, on the one hand, and the implications for the quality of democracy and people's long-term livelihoods, on the other. It is hoped that this thesis has made some contribution toward this end.

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<sup>573</sup> A major two-day conference on the theme *Political Clientelism, Social Policy, and the Quality of Democracy: Evidence from Latin America, Lessons from Other Regions* was held in Quito in November 2010

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## NEWSPAPERS AND OTHER MEDIA

News stories that have named authors are referenced under 'Books, Articles and Reports' by authors' names. News stories listed herein have unnamed authors and are listed chronologically under each category.

### A: NEWSPAPERS

#### ***Belize Newspapers***

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Sylvestre Trial. (1961, July 23). *Daily Clarion*, p. 1.

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## **B. TELEVISION NEWS STORIES**

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## **C: RADIO AND TELEVISION SHOWS**

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*Open Your Eyes*. (Morning talk show). Channel Five, Belize City.

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*Prime Ministers' Forum: Belize at 30*. Live broadcast on various radio and television stations, 14 September, 2011, Belize City.

## **LETTERS FROM THE GEORGE PRICE ARCHIVAL COLLECTION**

These are listed chronologically.

1. John Bo (citizen) to George Price, Prime Minister, 1 October 1980. (GPAC, Item not coded).
2. Carlos Castillo, Principal, Wesley College to George Price, Prime Minister, 3 October 1980, Government of Belize, Belmopan. (GPAC, Item not coded).
3. George Price, Prime Minister, to Jane Usher, Minister of Housing, 29 January 1981, Government of Belize, Belmopan. (GPAC, Inter-ministerial Communication (IMC)-Item no. 71).
4. Assad Shoman, Minister of Health, to George Price, Prime Minister, 5 June 1981, Government of Belize, Belmopan. (GPAC, IMC-Item not coded).
5. George Price, Prime Minister, to Florencio Marin, Minister of Lands, 20 May 1982, Government of Belize, Belmopan. (GPAC, IMC-Item not coded).
6. George Price, Prime Minister, to Elodio Briceño, Minister of Energy, 6 November 1984, Government of Belize, Belmopan. (GPAC, IMC-Item no. 82).
7. George Price, Prime Minister, to Assad Shoman, Minister of Health, 22 November 1984, Government of Belize, Belmopan. (GPAC, IMC-Item no. 102).
8. George Price, Prime Minister, to V.H. Courtenay, Attorney-General, 8 November 1984, Government of Belize, Belmopan. (GPAC, IMC-Item no. 57).
9. George Price, Prime Minister, to Said Musa, Minister of Sports, 20 November 1984, Government of Belize, Belmopan. (GPAC, IMC-Item no. 74).
10. George Price, Prime Minister, to Reconstruction and Development Corporation, 10 December 1984, Government of Belize, Belmopan. (GPAC, IMC-Item no. 64).

## **OTHER ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS**

1. Hansard, House of Representatives, 1988-1989, Government of Belize.
2. Hansard, House of Representatives, 25 July, 2008, Government of Belize.
3. Court Registry: Action 388 of 1998/Election of Representative for Cayo West 27 August, 1998/Representation of the People's Act.

## **KEY POLITICAL EVENTS OBSERVED**

These are listed chronologically.

1. Caribbean Shores Constituency Party Convention (UDP), 5 December 2010, Belize City.
2. Collect Constituency (UDP), Educational Centre, 31 January 2011, Belize City.
3. Pickstock Constituency (UDP), Samuel Haynes Institute of Excellence, 2 February 2011, Belize City.
4. Collet Constituency Party Convention (UDP), 2 February 2011, Belize City.
5. Toledo West Village Campaign Meeting (UDP), 9 February 2011, San Jose, Toledo.
6. Political Clinic (Mobile), Toledo West Constituency (UDP), 11 February 2011, Punta Gorda Town.
7. Political Clinic, Toledo East Constituency (UDP), 14, February 2011, Punta Gorda Town.
8. Political Clinic, Toledo West Constituency (UDP), 17 February 2011, San Pedro Colombia, Toledo
9. Political Clinic, Belmopan Constituency, (UDP), 2 March, 2011, Belmopan.
10. Political Clinic, Orange Walk Constituency (PUP), 16 March 2011, 17 March 2011, Orange Walk Town.
11. Orange Walk Central Constituency Neighbourhood Meeting (PUP), 17 March 2011, Orange Walk Town.
12. Collet Constituency Party Convention (PUP), 20 March 2011, Belize City.
13. Port Loyola Constituency Party Convention (PUP), 20 March 2011, Belize City.
14. Political Clinic, Pickstock Constituency (UDP), 31 March 2011, Belize City.
15. Albert Constituency Party Convention (UDP), 1 April 2011, Belize City.
16. Freetown Constituency Party Convention (UDP), 10 April 2011, Belize City.

## **PERSONAL INTERVIEWS AND COMMUNICATIONS**

### **A: ELITE INTERVIEWS**

These are listed alphabetically by surname.

1. Judith Alpuche, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Human Development and Social Transformation, 7 December 2010, Belmopan.
2. Jennifer Arzu, Deputy Chairperson, VIP, 24 February 2011, Belmopan.
3. Rick August, Programme Coordinator, Help for Progress, 1 March 2011, Belmopan.
4. Everisto Avella, former constituency aspirant (PUP) in Cayo District, 1 March 2011, Belmopan.

5. Elias Awe, Director, Help for Progress, 1 March 2011, Belmopan.
6. Faith Babb, coordinator of Collet UDP constituency office and former minister (UDP), 31 January 2011, Belize City.
7. Servulo Baeza, former minister (PUP), 16 March 2011, Corozal Town.
8. Anna Dolores Balderamos-Garcia, constituency aspirant and former minister (PUP), 11 November 2010, Belize City.
9. Dr Carla Barnett, consultant, former Financial Secretary and former Deputy SG-CARICOM, 17 December 2010, Belize City.
10. Honourable Dean O. Barrow, Prime Minister and Minister of Finance (UDP), 1 April 2011, Belize City.
11. Dorothy Bradley, Chief Elections Officer, 7 April 2011, Belize City.
12. Honourable John Briceño, Leader of the Opposition and former Deputy Prime Minister (PUP), 23 November 2010, Belize City.
13. Rueben Campus, former minister (UDP), 17 March 2011, Orange Walk.
14. Armando ChoCo, Director, Toledo Cacao Growers Association, 15 February 2011, Punta Gorda.
15. Honourable Erwin Contreras, Minister of Economic Development (UDP), 12 December 2010, Belmopan.
16. Eamon Courtenay, senator and former minister (PUP), 11 November 2010, Belize City.
17. Honourable Juan Coy, Minister of State for Human Development (UDP), 11 February 2011, Punta Gorda.
18. Jose Coye, former minister (PUP), 11 November 2010, Belize City.
19. Hubert Elrington, former Minister (UDP-NABR), 16 November 2010, Belize City.
20. Honourable Wilfred Elrington, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade (UDP), 30 November 2010, Belmopan.
21. Jorge Espat, former minister (PUP), 10 November 2010, Belize City.
22. Mike Espat, former minister (PUP), 21 February 2011, Belize City.
23. Honourable Mark Espat, parliamentarian and former minister (PUP), 23 November 2010, Belize City.
24. Councillor Roger Espejo, City Councillor and former constituency aspirant (UDP), 25 November 2010, Belize City.
25. Rt. Honourable Dr Sir Manuel Esquivel, former prime minister (1984-1989 and 1993-1998) (UDP), 18 November 2010, Belmopan.
26. Honourable Patrick Faber, Minister of Education (UDP), 12 December 2010, Belize City.
27. Honourable Francis Fonseca, parliamentarian and former minister (PUP), 9 November 2010, Belize City.
28. Ralph Fonseca, former minister and former national campaign manager (PUP), 31 March 2011, Belize City.
29. Charles Gibson, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of the Public Service, 21 December 2010, Belmopan.
30. Honourable Henry Gordon, Senator (UDP), 14 December 2010, Belize City.
31. Damien Gough, constituency aspirant (UDP), 17 March 2011, Orange Walk.
32. Diane Haylock, former constituency candidate<sup>574</sup> (UDP) and former civil society leader, 10 November 2010, Belize City.
33. Honourable Melvin Hulse, Minister of Transport and Communication (UDP), 6 April 2011, Belmopan.
34. Fredrick Hunter, former minister (PUP), 5 November 2010, Belize City.
35. Lita Hunter-Krohn, former constituency candidate, 25 November 2011, Belize City.
36. Honourable Michael Hutchinson, Minister of State for Labour and Local Government (UDP), 6 April 2011, Belmopan.

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<sup>574</sup> 'Constituency candidate' refers to a person who has won a constituency party convention and has the right to represent a party in a constituency in a general election for the House of Representatives.

37. Dennis Jones, Director, Belize Enterprise for Sustainable Technology, 3 March 2011, Belmopan.
38. David Leacock, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Education, 12 December 2010, Belize City.
39. Adrian Leivia, Dean of Muffles Junior College, 23 March 2011, Orange Walk.
40. Stuart Leslie, Chief of Staff for Leader of the Opposition (PUP), 5 November 2010, Belize City.
41. Dean Lindo, first leader of the UDP and former minister (UDP), 3 November 2010, Belize City.
42. Mayor Simeon Lopez, Mayor of Belmopan (UDP), 4 March 2011, Belmopan.
43. Wil Maheia, Leader of the Peoples National Party, 8 February 2011, Punta Gorda Town.
44. Juan Vildo Marin, former minister (PUP), 22 March 2011, Corozal Town.
45. Honourable Eden Martinez, Minister of Human Development and Social Transformation (UDP), 14 February 2011, Punta Gorda Town.
46. Paul Morgan, Co-Leader of the Vision Inspired by the People [Party], 24 February 2011, Belmopan.
47. Honourable Said Musa, former prime minister (1998-2008) and former party leader (PUP), 26 November 2011, Belize City.
48. Myrtle Palacio, former constituency candidate (PUP) and former Chief Elections Officer, 13 December 2010, Belize City.
49. Eugene Palacio, Director of Local Government, 2 March 2011, Belmopan.
50. Robert Pennell, former constituency campaign manager (UDP), 8 February 2011
51. Rt. Honourable George Price, co-founder of the PUP, first premier (1964-1981), first and former prime minister (1981-1984 and 1989-1993), 17 November 2010, Belize City.
52. Osmany Salas, civil society leader and business owner, 10 March 2011, Orange Walk.
53. Honourable John Saldivar, Minister of the Public Service and Governance Reform (UDP), 30 November 2010, Belmopan.
54. Carlos Santos, former constituency aspirant (PUP), 1 March 2011, Belmopan.
55. Allan Sharp, former board member of Association of Concerned Belizeans and former chairperson of Belize Trade and Investment Development Service, 11 April 2011, Belize City.
56. Assad Shoman, former minister (PUP) and former NGO leader, 7 March 2011, Belize City.
57. Honourable Douglas Singh, Senator and Minister of the Police, 12 November 2010, Belize City.
58. Hector Silva, former minister (pre-independence, PUP), 1 December 2010, San Ignacio Town.
59. Godfrey Smith, former minister (PUP), 10 November 2010, Belize City.
60. Dr Francis Smith, constituency candidate (PUP), 30 January 2011, Belize City.
61. Lawrence Sylvester, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, 2 March 2011, Belmopan.
62. Bartulo Teul, Programme Coordinator, Yaxache Conservation Trust, 15 February 2011, Punta Gorda Town.
63. Honourable Pulcheria Teul, Senator and constituency aspirant (UDP), 17 March 2011, Punta Gorda Town.
64. Mary Vasquez, Director, Restore Belize, 7 April 2011, Belize City.

65. Alejandro Vernon, former parliamentarian (pre-independence, various parties), 15 March 2011, Punta Gorda Town.
66. Anne-Marie Williams, Director of National Women's Commission and former constituency aspirant (UDP), 14 December 2010, Belize City.
67. Henry Young Sr., former minister (UDP), 2 November 2010, Belize City.
68. Edmund Zuniga, Auditor General of Belize, 24 February 2011, Belmopan.
69. Francisco Zuniga, Assistant Chief Elections Officer, 7 April 2011, Belize City.

## **B: INTERVIEWS WITH BROKERS**

The names of brokers interviewed have been changed.

1. Broker Dan, 1 February 2011, Belize City.
2. Broker Mary, 26 January 2011, Belize City.
3. Broker Pete, 18 February 2011, Punta Gorda Town.
4. Broker Jan, 15 March 2011, Orange Walk Town.
5. Broker Ted, 21 March Orange Walk Town.
6. Broker John, 31 March 2011, Belize City.

## **C: INTERVIEWS WITH CONSTITUENTS**

The names of constituents interviewed have been coded and are listed chronologically.

### **Pickstock Constituency (Code: P)**

Constituents P1-P27

| <b>CODE</b>            | <b>SEX</b> | <b>PLACE/DATE/MONTH 2011</b> |
|------------------------|------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Constituent P1</b>  | m          | Belize City, 24 January      |
| <b>Constituent P2</b>  | f          | Belize City, 24 January      |
| <b>Constituent P3</b>  | f          | Belize City, 24 January      |
| <b>Constituent P4</b>  | f          | Belize City, 25 January      |
| <b>Constituent P5</b>  | m          | Belize City, 25 January      |
| <b>Constituent P6</b>  | f          | Belize City, 26 January      |
| <b>Constituent P7</b>  | m          | Belize City, 27 January      |
| <b>Constituent P8</b>  | f          | Belize City, 27 January      |
| <b>Constituent P9</b>  | f          | Belize City, 28 January      |
| <b>Constituent P10</b> | m          | Belize City, 28 January      |
| <b>Constituent P11</b> | f          | Belize City, 28 January      |
| <b>Constituent P12</b> | f          | Belize City, 28 January      |
| <b>Constituent P13</b> | f          | Belize City, 31 January      |
| <b>Constituent P14</b> | f          | Belize City, 31 January      |
| <b>Constituent P15</b> | f          | Belize City, 1 February      |
| <b>Constituent P16</b> | f          | Belize City, 1 February      |
| <b>Constituent P18</b> | m          | Belize City, 3 February      |
| <b>Constituent P19</b> | m          | Belize City, 3 February      |
| <b>Constituent P20</b> | m          | Belize City, 3 February      |
| <b>Constituent P21</b> | m          | Belize City, 4 February      |
| <b>Constituent P22</b> | m          | Belize City, 5 February      |
| <b>Constituent P23</b> | f          | Belize City, 5 February      |
| <b>Constituent P24</b> | m          | Belize City, 31 March        |
| <b>Constituent P25</b> | m          | Belize City, 25 January      |
| <b>Constituent P26</b> | f          | Belize City, 2 February      |
| <b>Constituent P27</b> | m          | Belize City, 2 February      |

**Toledo East Constituency (Code: TE)**

Constituents TE1-TE35

| CODE             | SEX | PLACE/DATE/MONTH 2011           |
|------------------|-----|---------------------------------|
| Constituent TE1  | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 6 February    |
| Constituent TE2  | f   | Punta Gorda Town, 8 February    |
| Constituent TE3  | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 6 February    |
| Constituent TE4  | f   | Punta Gorda Town, 6 February    |
| Constituent TE5  | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 6 February    |
| Constituent TE6  | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 6 February    |
| Constituent TE7  | f   | Punta Gorda Town, 7 February    |
| Constituent TE8  | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 7 February    |
| Constituent TE9  | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 8 February    |
| Constituent TE10 | f   | Punta Gorda Town, 8 February    |
| Constituent TE11 | f   | Boom Creek, 8 February          |
| Constituent TE12 | f   | Punta Gorda Town, 8 February    |
| Constituent TE13 | f   | Punta Gorda Town, 8 February    |
| Constituent TE14 | f   | Punta Gorda Town, 9 February    |
| Constituent TE15 | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 10 February   |
| Constituent TE16 | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 11 February   |
| Constituent TE17 | f   | Punta Gorda Town, 10 February   |
| Constituent TE18 | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 11 February   |
| Constituent TE19 | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 11 February   |
| Constituent TE20 | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 11 February   |
| Constituent TE21 | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 18 February   |
| Constituent TE22 | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 16 February   |
| Constituent TE23 | f   | Punta Gorda Town, 16 February   |
| Constituent TE24 | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 16 February   |
| Constituent TE25 | m   | San Pedro Columbia, 17 February |
| Constituent TE26 | m   | San Pedro Columbia, 17 February |
| Constituent TE27 | m   | San Pedro Columbia, 17 February |
| Constituent TE28 | m   | San Pedro Columbia, 17 February |
| Constituent TE29 | m   | Santa Ana, 17 February          |
| Constituent TE30 | m   | Santa Ana, 17 February          |
| Constituent TE31 | m   | San Felipe, 17 February         |
| Constituent TE32 | m   | Bella Vista, 18 February        |
| Constituent TE33 | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 8 February    |
| Constituent TE34 | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 18 February   |
| Constituent TE35 | m   | Punta Gorda Town, 14 February   |

**Orange Walk Central Constituency (Code: OW)**

Constituents OW1-OW26

| CODE             | SEX | PLACE/DATE/MONTH 2011      |
|------------------|-----|----------------------------|
| Constituent OW1  | m   | Orange Walk Town, 10 March |
| Constituent OW2  | f   | Orange Walk Town, 15 March |
| Constituent OW3  | m   | Orange Walk Town, 15 March |
| Constituent OW4  | m   | Orange Walk Town, 15 March |
| Constituent OW5  | f   | Orange Walk Town, 15 March |
| Constituent OW6  | m   | Orange Walk Town, 18 March |
| Constituent OW7  | m   | Orange Walk Town, 16 March |
| Constituent OW8  | f   | Orange Walk Town, 17 March |
| Constituent OW9  | m   | San Estevan, 21 March      |
| Constituent OW10 | f   | San Estevan, 21 March      |



|                         |   |                            |
|-------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| <b>Constituent OW11</b> | m | Orange Walk Town, 17 March |
| <b>Constituent OW12</b> | m | Orange Walk Town, 17 March |
| <b>Constituent OW13</b> | m | Orange Walk Town, 18 March |
| <b>Constituent OW14</b> | m | Orange Walk Town, 21 March |
| <b>Constituent OW15</b> | f | Orange Walk Town, 21 March |
| <b>Constituent OW16</b> | f | Orange Walk Town, 21 March |
| <b>Constituent OW17</b> | f | Orange Walk Town, 21 March |
| <b>Constituent OW18</b> | m | Orange Walk Town, 22 March |
| <b>Constituent OW19</b> | f | Orange Walk Town, 22 March |
| <b>Constituent OW20</b> | m | Orange Walk Town, 23 March |
| <b>Constituent OW21</b> | f | Orange Walk Town, 23 March |
| <b>Constituent OW22</b> | m | Orange Walk Town, 23 March |
| <b>Constituent OW23</b> | m | Orange Walk Town, 23 March |
| <b>Constituent OW24</b> | f | Orange Walk Town, 23 March |
| <b>Constituent OW25</b> | m | Orange Walk Town, 23 March |
| <b>Constituent OW26</b> | f | Orange Walk Town, 23 March |

### **Belmopan Constituency (Code: B)**

Constituents B1-B26

| <b>CODE</b>            | <b>SEX</b> | <b>PLACE/DATE/MONTH 2011</b> |
|------------------------|------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Constituent B1</b>  | m          | Belmopan, 1 March            |
| <b>Constituent B2</b>  | m          | Belmopan, 2 March            |
| <b>Constituent B3</b>  | f          | Belmopan, 1 March            |
| <b>Constituent B4</b>  | f          | Belmopan, 1 March            |
| <b>Constituent B5</b>  | m          | Belmopan, 1 March            |
| <b>Constituent B6</b>  | m          | Belmopan, 1 March            |
| <b>Constituent B7</b>  | m          | Belmopan, 1 March            |
| <b>Constituent B8</b>  | m          | Belmopan, 3 March            |
| <b>Constituent B9</b>  | m          | Salvapan, 4 March            |
| <b>Constituent B10</b> | f          | Salvapan, 4 March            |
| <b>Constituent B11</b> | m          | Salvapan, 4 March            |
| <b>Constituent B12</b> | f          | San Martin, 3 March          |
| <b>Constituent B13</b> | m          | San Martin, 3 March          |
| <b>Constituent B14</b> | m          | San Martin, 3 March          |
| <b>Constituent B15</b> | f          | Belmopan, 1 March            |
| <b>Constituent B16</b> | f          | Belmopan, 1 March            |
| <b>Constituent B17</b> | m          | Belmopan, 4 March            |
| <b>Constituent B18</b> | f          | Belmopan, 3 March            |
| <b>Constituent B19</b> | f          | Belmopan, 2 March            |
| <b>Constituent B20</b> | m          | Belmopan, 4 March            |
| <b>Constituent B21</b> | f          | Belmopan, 2 March            |
| <b>Constituent B22</b> | m          | Belmopan, 2 March            |
| <b>Constituent B23</b> | m          | Belmopan, 2 March            |
| <b>Constituent B24</b> | m          | Belmopan, 2 March            |
| <b>Constituent B25</b> | m          | Belmopan, 2 March            |
| <b>Constituent B26</b> | m          | Belmopan, 2 March            |

## **D: FOCUS GROUPS**

1. Focus Group with 32 students of Sociology class, University College of Belize-Toledo Campus, 14 February 2011, Punta Gorda Town.

## **E: PERSONAL COMMUNICATIONS**

These were not full interviews, but communications aimed at gathering specific data or clarifying information.<sup>575</sup> They are listed alphabetically by surname.

1. Personal communication (email) with Yvette Alvarez, Financial Advisor, Ministry of Finance, Government of Belize, 4 March 2012.
2. Personal communication (letter) with Honourable Emil Argüelles, Speaker of the House of Representatives, National Assembly, 29 August 2009.
3. Personal communication (telephone) with Celene Cleland, Executive Director, Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry, 7 April 2011.
4. Personal communication (meeting) with Dalilia Gibson, Director Human Resources Management Information Systems, Government of Belize, 2 December 2010, Belmopan.
5. Personal communication (email) with Sir Manuel Esquivel, 2 May and 15 May 2012.
6. Personal communication (conversation) with Dr Amin Hegar, constituency candidate and former parliamentarian (PUP), 30 March 2011.
7. Personal communication (meeting) with Debra Lewis, member of the Women's Circle, 24 March 2012, Belize City.
8. Personal communication (email) with Anne Macpherson, Associate Professor, SUNY, 29 March 2012.
9. Personal communication (email) with Marian McNab, Chief Executive Officer, Ministry of the Public Service, 6 February 2013.
10. Personal communication (meeting) with Dean Roches, accountant, 2 February 2011.
11. Personal communication (email) with Michael Rosberg, social sector consultant, 29 August 2012.
12. Personal communication (telephone) with Carla Sainsbury, Director, Belize Housing Mission, 11 April 2011.
13. Personal communication (email) with Henry Usher, Party Chairman (PUP), 7 July 2011.

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<sup>575</sup> This list does not include follow-up communications with interviewees to request the use of a quotation.

# APPENDICES

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## APPENDIX 1

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FOUR CONSTITUENCIES SELECTED FOR FOCUSED RESEARCH

The four constituencies (representing 13 per cent of total electoral constituencies) were selected to generally reflect the proportional breakdown of 26 UDP to 5 PUP seats held in the House of Representatives in 2010. Consequently, three UDP (Pickstock, Belmopan and Toledo East) and one PUP constituency (Orange Walk Central) were selected.

Although it was not feasible to select one constituency from each of the six administrative districts, those selected cover the main geographic regions of the country and generally reflect the near 50/50 rural-to-urban break down of the population. They are also generally reflective of the ethnic demographics of Belize, with a focus on the four largest ethnic groups (Creole, Mestizo, Garifuna and Maya).

Three of the selected constituencies are in districts that have a range of (individual) poverty incidence below the national average of 41.3 per cent and Gini coefficients (GC) just below the national average of 0.42.

A brief description of basic constituency information (as at the start of field work in August 2010) and of the research conducted per constituency is presented below.

#### (1) PICKSTOCK CONSTITUENCY

##### ***Basic Facts***

- This urban constituency is on both the north and south side of Belize City in the central coastal Belize District. It is small in geographic size and densely populated.
- There were 3,168 registered voters in 2010.
- Pickstock is predominately Creole in ethnicity (circa 65 per cent).
- The constituency is mixed in terms of income classes. However, most people are wage labourers and there are significant pockets of urban poverty.
- The individual poverty rate for the Belize District was 28.8 per cent in 2010, and its GC was 0.41.
- The constituency was held by the governing UDP (2008-2012) in 2010.
- The incumbent representative was Minister Wilfred Elrington who is of Creole ethnicity.
- The PUP's candidate was Dr Francis Smith.
- Very few CSOs operate in the division.

##### ***Research Conducted***

- **Elite interviews (4):** Minister Wilfred Elrington (UDP representative), Dr Francis Smith (current PUP candidate), Godfrey Smith (former PUP representative), Diane Haylock (former UDP candidate).
- **Brokers (3):** One current PUP, one current UDP and one past UDP.
- **Citizens/Clients (27):** 12 males, 15 females.
- **Other:** Street observation, collection of documents.

## **(2) ORANGE WALK CENTRAL CONSTITUENCY**

### ***Basic Facts***

- This rural/urban constituency is in the northern district of Orange Walk. It includes Orange Walk Town but also several rural villages. Orange Walk Town proper is relatively small in geographic size and densely populated.
- There were 6,139 registered voters in 2010.
- It has been predominantly Mestizo in ethnicity and most people are employed in the sugar cane industry.
- In 2010, the individual poverty rate for the Orange Walk district was 42.8 per cent and the GC was 0.36.
- The division was held by the opposition PUP (2008-2012).
- The incumbent representative was the Honourable John Briceño, who was also the Leader of the PUP and of the Opposition (2008-2011). He is of Mestizo ethnicity.
- No UDP constituency candidate was selected at time of fieldwork. There were two UDP aspirants.
- A small number of CSOs operate in the division.

### ***Research Conducted***

- **Elite interviews (3):** Honourable John Briceño (PUP representative), Damien Gough (key UDP aspirant), Rueben Campus (former UDP representative)
- **Brokers (2):** One current PUP and one former UDP.
- **Citizens/Clients (26):** 15 males, 11 females.
- **Other:** Observation (including political clinics, neighbourhood meeting) and collection of documents.

## **(3) TOLEDO EAST CONSTITUENCY**

### ***Basic Facts***

- This rural/urban constituency is in the most southern district of Toledo near the border with Guatemala. It includes the urban town of Punta Gorda but also 20 rural villages. It is one of the largest constituencies in geographic size. Although Punta Gorda Town is relatively densely populated, the villages are mostly small and spread out. It includes the large 'new' village of Bella Vista, a predominately Latino immigrant community set up in the 1990s to house banana workers.
- There were 6,183 registered voters in 2010.
- It is of mixed ethnicity (Maya, Creoles, Garifuna and East Indian), but also has several relatively new immigrant communities.
- Agriculture and tourism are the main industries in the district.
- In 2010, the Toledo District had the highest rate of individual poverty in Belize at 60.4 per cent and the highest GC at 0.46.
- The division was held by the ruling UDP.
- The incumbent representative was Minister Eden Martinez, who is of Garifuna ethnicity.
- The PUP constituency candidate was Mike Espat, a former representative and former minister, and a Deputy Leader of the PUP (2008-2012).
- The People's National Party (PNP) has its base in Toledo and its leader, Wil Maheia, was the constituency candidate.
- A relatively large number of CSOs operate in the division.

### ***Research Conducted***

- **Elite interviews(4):** Minister Eden Martinez (UDP representative), Mike Espat (PUP candidate), Alejandro Vernon (former PUP representative), Will Maheia (PNP candidate)
- **Brokers (1):** One UDP.
- **Citizens/Clients (35):** 25 males, 10 females)
- **Other:** Focus group with students at University of Belize (32), observation and collection of documents.

## **(4) BELMOPAN CONSTITUENCY**

### ***Basic Facts***

- This urban constituency is in the capital city of Belmopan in the Cayo District and in the geographical centre of the country. The central part of the capital is small and densely populated. Several 'new' semi-urban communities are on the immediate fringe of central Belmopan.
- There were 6,733 registered voters in 2010.
- It is an ethnically-mixed division (Creole, Mestizo, Maya and Garinagu). As such it reflects the national ethnic breakdown.
- Most of the Mestizo population are recent immigrants from Guatemala and El Salvador. Most of the Maya residents are recent internal migrants. Most of the Mestizo/Maya population reside in the semi-urban communities outside the centre, which is made up of a majority Creole population.
- Most people are employed in the public service or agriculture.
- In 2010, the individual poverty rate for Cayo District was 40.6 per cent and the GC was 0.41.
- The constituency was held by the ruling UDP party (2008-2012).
- The incumbent representative was Minister John Saldivar, who is of Creole ethnicity.
- The PUP did not have a candidate at the time of fieldwork and four aspirants were vying for the seat. One of these was Dr. Amin Hegar, who became the PUP candidate.
- The Vision Inspired by the People (VIP) (an alternative party) has been active in this division.
- A significant number of CSOs operate in the division.

### ***Research Conducted***

- **Elite interviews (4):** Minister John Saldivar (UDP representative), Paul Morgan (VIP co-leader and candidate), Jennifer Arzu (VIP Deputy Chair). Personal communication conducted with Dr Amin Hegar (PUP aspirant).
- **Brokers (0): However,** interviews were conducted with key UDP party workers.
- **Citizens/Clients (26):** 16 males, 10 females)
- **Other:** Observation (including of a political clinic), archival and library research and collection of documents. An interview was also conducted with the Mayor of Belmopan, Simeon Lopez (UDP).

## APPENDIX 2

### INDICATIVE QUESTIONS FOR ELITE INTERVIEWEES

#### Part 1: The emergence of political clientelism.

| QUESTION AREAS   | INDICATIVE QUESTIONS  |
|--|---|
| <b>Clientelism under British rule after self-government in 1964</b>                              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Did the British use political clientelism?</li> <li>2. What mechanisms did they use?</li> <li>3. Who was targeted?</li> <li>4. How were locals involved as patrons/brokers/implementers?</li> <li>5. How effective was it?</li> </ol>   |
| <b>The 'beginnings' of political party type clientelism as the two main parties consolidated</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How did the PUP/UDP begin its involvement in providing (informally) goods and services to voters/citizens?</li> <li>2. What was the role of the first Prime Minister, George Price, in launching the 'culture' of political clinics?</li> <li>3. Why was this seen as necessary?</li> <li>4. How did it differ from the earlier version?</li> </ol>   |
| <b>Extent of political clientelism at time of independence</b>                                   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Was it only around election time?</li> <li>2. How widespread and active were political clinics?</li> <li>3. Can you estimate the number/percentage of voters/clients?</li> <li>4. What types of goods and services were provided to clients?</li> <li>5. What types of political support were expected from/provided by clients?</li> <li>6. Were resources always provided to individuals or were there also collective goods?</li> <li>7. What amount of funds was needed?</li> <li>8. Personal examples of 'political clientelism' in action</li> </ol>  |
| <b>The practice of political clientelism at time of independence</b>                             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How were goods and services transferred to clients?</li> <li>2. How were decisions made as to who gets what? Importance of party colours?</li> <li>3. Were the departments/budgets/services of government (resource allocation institutions) used as sources for transfers to clients?</li> <li>4. How did clinics work? What changes were there over time?</li> <li>5. Were there clientelist networks?</li> <li>6. How much personal contact was there with constituents?</li> <li>7. Were brokers used?</li> <li>8. What were the sources of funds? Personal, party, private, government?</li> <li>9. How was it ensured that clients provide the support they promise?</li> </ol> |
| <b>Poverty and social needs</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What role did/does poverty/social needs play in the beginning and operations of party-based political clientelism?</li> <li>2. Did/does it help address poverty?</li> <li>3. Did/does it create dependence by the poor?</li> </ol>  |
| <b>Gender, ethnicity, migration</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Did/do gender, ethnicity, migration (new migrants) play any role in the operation and decision-making around political clientelism?</li> <li>2. Were there any conflicts based on these differences?</li> </ol>   |

## Part 2: The expansion of political clientelism

| QUESTION AREAS  | INDICATIVE QUESTIONS  |
|---|---|
| <b>The expansion of political party type clientelism as the two main parties consolidated</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Why did the PUP/UDP expand its involvement in providing (informally) goods and services to voters/citizens?</li> <li>2. What were indicators of the expansion?</li> <li>3. How was political clientelism different than before independence?</li> <li>4. Was/is political clientelism seen as useful/necessary strategy?</li> </ol>   |
| <b>Extent of political clientelism at time of 1989, 1998, 2008</b>                            | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How widespread were/are political clinics?</li> <li>2. Which constituencies have the highest incidence of clientelism?</li> <li>3. Can you estimate the number/percentage of voters/clients?</li> <li>4. What types of goods and services were/are provided to clients?</li> <li>5. What types of political support were/are provided by clients?</li> <li>6. Were/are resources always 'individual goods' or also collective goods? i.e., roads, programmes etc.</li> <li>7. What amounts of funds were/are needed?</li> <li>8. Do you have any personal examples of 'political clientelism' in action?</li> </ol>   |
| <b>Operations of political clientelism</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How were/are goods and services transferred to clients?</li> <li>2. Have the departments of government (resource allocation institutions) been used as sources for transfers to clients?</li> <li>3. How did/do political clinics work?</li> <li>4. Were/are brokers used? How?</li> <li>6. Were/are there clientelist networks (collectives of clients)?</li> <li>6. What was/is the extent of personal contact with constituents?</li> <li>7. What were/are the sources of funds?</li> <li>9. How was/is it ensured that clients provide the support they promise?</li> <li>10. Did you/your division receive any of the Venezuela funds? How? How much? For what? How was it disbursed?</li> </ol> |
| <b>Poverty and social needs</b>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What role did poverty/social needs play in the beginning and operations of party-based political clientelism?</li> <li>2. Does it help address poverty?</li> <li>3. Does it create dependence?</li> </ol>   |
| <b>Gender, ethnicity and migration</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Did/do gender, ethnicity and migration (new migrants) play any role in the operation and decision-making around political clientelism?</li> <li>2. Were/are there conflicts based on these differences?</li> </ol>  |



### Part 3: On the implications of political clientelism

| QUESTION AREAS             | INDICATIVE QUESTIONS   |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Implications/impact</b> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Did/does it always work for parties/candidates?</li><li>2. What are your views on the implications for participation, resource distribution, transparency and accountability, and policy reform?</li><li>5. Who benefits most?</li><li>3. Are there any downsides?</li><li>4. Are there any links to violence? To drug trade?</li></ol> |
| <b>Other</b>               | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. What are overall impressions on the usefulness and impact of political clientelism for clients? For parties and candidates? For Belize</li></ol>  |

## APPENDIX 3

### COPY OF INFORMED CONSENT FORM USED FOR ELITE INTERVIEWEES



### INFORMED CONSENT

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1. I agree to participate in an interview in connection with research being conducted by **Dylan Vernon** ('the researcher') in connection with research work for his PhD thesis on relationships among political parties, politicians and their constituents in Belize.
2. I understand that:
  - The researcher will take handwritten notes of the interview
  - The interview will be audio recorded by the researcher also.
3. I understand that I can withdraw at any stage. In the event that I withdraw from the interview, any notes made will not be used for the thesis.
4. I understand that, upon completion of the interview, the content may be used by the researcher to inform analysis and for the writing-up of his thesis and/or related research papers.
5. I understand that persons being interviewed for this research will generally remain anonymous. In the event that the researcher would like to directly quote a statement(s) attributed to me in his thesis and/or related research papers:
  - My permission is hereby given
  - My permission must be solicited prior to such use
6. I understand that at the conclusion of this particular study the written transcripts of the interviews will be kept by the researcher and that the completed PhD thesis will be available in the University of London, Senate House Library.
7. If I have questions about the research project or procedures, I know I can contact **Maxine Molyneau**, Director of the Institute for the Study of the Americas, Tel: +4402078628870; email: [americas@sas.ac.uk](mailto:americas@sas.ac.uk).

Person Interviewed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

Interviewer signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **INDICATIVE DISCUSSION AREAS FOR CITIZEN INTERVIEWEES**

1. Expectations of politicians and constituency representatives.
2. Relationships with constituency politicians and brokers.
3. Participation in political clinics.
4. The nature of the clientelist exchanges and agreements made.
5. The kinds of resources and services provided by patrons.
6. Knowledge/involvement with the 'Venezuela money.'
7. The kinds of support provided to politicians.
8. Perceptions and involvement in civil society participation alternatives.
9. The role of ethnicity in clientelist exchanges.
10. The role played by poverty and socio-economic need.
11. Perceptions on the cost/benefits of political clientelism to the individual client, constituencies and the nation.
12. Prospects of decreasing political clientelism.

## APPENDIX 5

### ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES OF NEWS STORIES ON POLITICAL CLIENTELISM: 1991-2011

#### **References to Vote trading**

1. 'Esquivel Gives Howell \$700,000 to Buy Votes'. *Belize Times*. March 3, 1996. (Alleges that vote buying is intended by UDP in a by-election.)
2. 'Minister Buying Voter ID Cards'. *Belize Times*. May 29, 1997. (Alleges that a UDP minister is bribing election official to buy voter ID cards for illegal immigrants.)
3. 'Immigration Racket in Voter Fraud.' *Belize Times*. February 22, 1998. (Alleges illegal registering of new immigrants for electoral advantage by the UDP.)
4. '[Voter] Bribery Allegation in Cayo West Thrown out of Court'. *Channel 5 News*. January 7, 2000. (Reports on the failure of a losing PUP candidate to get the Supreme Court to hear charges of voter bribery.)
5. 'Association of Concerned Belizeans Launches Campaign against Vote Buying'. *Channel 5 News*. February 1, 2006. (Reports on the campaign of citizen group to discourage vote trading.)
6. 'Selling Out: How Much is Your Vote Worth?' *Independent*. January 12, 2007. (Discusses prevalence of vote buying and argues that voters do not benefit in long-term.)
7. 'Blue Notes for Blue Votes'. *Independent*. July 6, 2007. (Alleges that voters were paid to attend a PUP party convention.)
8. 'Will These Elections be Bought?' *Reporter*. January 20, 2008. (Discusses whether the Venezuela money will be used to try to buy votes in the 2008 election.)
9. 'Elections and Boundaries Says it Can't Ban Camera Phones'. *Amandala*. February 5, 2008. (Reports on response of Elections and Boundaries Commission in response to allegations that cell phones photographs can be used to confirm that paid voters were voting for the right party.)
10. 'PUP Area Reps Got \$100,000-\$150,000 Each, UDP Got Nothing'. *Amandala*. February 5, 2008. (Reports on interview with Financial Secretary that much of the Venezuela grant was distributed among politicians of the incumbent party prior to 2008 election.)
11. 'Stop Sell Unu Votes, My Belizean People!' [Letter to the Editor]. *Amandala*. December 18, 2010. (Encourages voters to refuse offers from politicians for vote buying.)
12. 'Joe Blames Dirty Politics and \$\$\$!' *Amandala*. April 15, 2011. (Reports on a candidate's allegations of vote buying by his opponent as the reason for his lost in a PUP party convention.)
13. 'Tom Morrison Alleges Vote Buying in UDP Albert Division'. *Belize Times*. April 17, 2011. (Reports on a candidate's allegations of vote buying by his opponent as the reason for his lost in a UDP party convention.)

#### **References to Political Clientelism in Various Thematic Areas**

14. 'PUP Insider Trading in Land'. *Amandala*. July 5, 1991. (Argues that land has been used for partisan political influence with the wealthy and the poor by both political parties.)
15. 'Crazy Land Give Away'. *Belize Times*. August 16, 1998. (Alleges irregularities in pre-election land grants and leases by the UDP.)

16. '7 News Unearths Report on Scholarship Scandal'. *7 News*. December 1, 2004. (Reports on confirmation of allegations of abuse of public funds for education being given to non-students under PUP government.)
17. 'PUP Land Hustle Fully Exposed'. *Guardian*. July 8, 2007. (Alleges irregularities in pre-election land grants and leases.)
18. 'Free Textbooks Politricks Backfire on PUP'. *Guardian*. July 15, 2007. (Alleges that the government is using textbooks as handouts.)
19. 'Venezuela Millions Are Here But Not for Everyone'. *Reporter*. January 13, 2008. (Reports that Venezuela housing grants are being given out on partisan basis.)
20. 'PM Musa Presents "One Child, One Laptop" at St. Mary's Primary School.' *Belize Times*. February 3, 2008. (Reports on free laptop scheme being launched the same week of the 2008 general election.)
21. 'PM Barrow Defends Firings at Ministry of Works'. *Amandala*. April 11, 2008. (Reports on interview with Prime Minister Barrow in which he defends particular post-election firings with the argument that people in his party deserve a break after 10 years in opposition.)
22. 'Venezuela Money Will be Free Money'. *7 News*. October 15, 2008. (Informs of Prime Minister Barrow's announcement that the recovered portion of the Venezuela money will be given out as housing grants through parliamentarians.)
23. '75 Families in Collet Receive Housing Grants' *7 News*. August 28, 2009. (Reports on the parliamentarian for Collet handing out up to \$3000 per person in grants (from Venezuela money) to 75 constituents for housing repairs.)
24. 'Christmas Crush at Finnegan's Office'. *7 News*. December 17, 2009. (Reports on crowd of 300 constituents at a constituency clinic queuing for pre-Christmas handouts.)
25. 'Government's Housing Portfolio Alarming'. *7 News*. August 4, 2010. (Reports of \$52 million in non-performing housing 'loans' to lower-income and middle-income persons that both parties gave out over a 20 year period and that government will do a total write-off.)

#### **Other References to Political Clientelism**

26. 'Corruption, Cronyism, Nepotism'. *Belize Times*. January 28, 1996. (Alleges various acts of nepotism by a UDP minister of government.)
27. 'The Fault in Us'. *Amandala*. January 16, 2005. (Discusses the normalcy of people expecting money for votes and the sources of money for handouts.)
28. 'Special Favours for a Chosen Few.' *Amandala*. August 13, 2006. (Reports on known upper-income PUP partisans receiving and not paying back low-interest loans from a government financing institution.)
29. 'Money, Politics and Democracy'. *Flashpoint*. March 4, 2007. (Argues that year-round handouts are the biggest portion of private donations to parties and questions whether campaign financing can be effectively legislated.)
30. 'Narco Money in the Politics of Belize'. *Amandala*. October 2, 2007. (Suggests that drug money may have been tapped into to try to buy the 1993 election.)

APPENDIX 6

SAMPLE ELECTION POSTER, circa December 2011



Source: Election ephemera (electronic poster) collected in Belize in 2011.