

empty vats provided a play time diversion for the 1960's inmates of the Montserrat Secondary School. This was the first 'White Elephant' of my memory, doomed by the exploitive one cent per pound pricing for tomatoes. The processing factory later became a dead elephant.

Since then, Montserrat has remained famous for elephants, briefly for golden elephants, but now for a growing list of dead or dying elephants.

What definition for a dead elephant? "A national asset which cost a lot of somebody else's money, which has become of no use, but during its development and construction phases provided lucrative income opportunities for selected parties."

Fortunately, nature is responsible for most of the dead elephants. We have had for the past million years, and will probably for the next million years, have a live volcano with vents that contain magma and lava. A volcano that sits on geological plates that will continue to move against each other and every now and then, send off a little more magma up the vents. Nothing has changed since the current eruption has abated, so all we need to know is the range of potential destruction by our little puffer, and thus avoid future volcanic dead elephants by, for example, forgetting about Blackbourne/William Bramble Airport until Langs Souffriere becomes extinct.

Political paralysis and inertia has been a partner of the mountain in the building of our reputation for dead elephants. The Library, New Glendon Hospital and the inadequate efforts to salvage and store millions of dollars of public property, are examples of dead elephant making which should have influenced decisions for the future.

We should launch a 'Society for the prevention of dead elephants', to safe guard the interests of both public and private sectors. This society would have as its principle role, the identification and publication of discussions on projects at risk of elephantine demise.

Whether it be: a reservoir that causes land slippage, a housing complex with no where for sewage, a cricket field too near a petrol depot, a heliport soon made redundant by a landing strip for aircraft, a jetty built in the wrong place, a discotheque that may be replaced in a few years by a 3 or 4 story commercial building, an old people's home that becomes storerooms, chipboard houses which fall apart before the option for purchase can be exercised, or a government headquarters rebuilt in continuum.

Identifying projects at risk will not be enough. The society will have to keep the public aware of the factors "Necro elephantia causa" These include: change of political directorate (where the incoming government scraps the priorities of the previous administration), poor planning, inadequate marketing, inaccurate feasibility studies and reports, suppression or ignoring of reports and studies, ignorance, greed, selfishness, nepotism and political patronage. ■

LOOKING BACK - WHAT KMAM SAID

27th April, 1996

Two days ago I pleaded with a bewildered, grey haired old man, in his 80's not to return to his house in Tuitts. He said, "It's not going to blow, not with out a lot of earthquakes

first." He may be right. All of our other mountains were once domes. They did not explode, but took seed and became an evergreen carpet of trees.

I asked him "What will it take to make you move?" "If they move my little house so I don't have to go to the horrible Shelter" was his reply.

There is one of our solutions to the shelter problem, MOVE MOVABLE HOUSES.

A young lady discharged from hospital yesterday, said among other things "My school clothes are in long Ground" "They are lost for good" I replied. "No, my parents go there everyday, we have no place to store our things," was her surprising reply.

Another solution: A FENCED COMPOUND ON LEASED OR GOVERNMENT LAND IN THE SAFE AREA, WITH CONTAINERS OR ANGELO'S TYPE BUILDINGS, USED AS A TEMPORARY SECURE LEFT LUGGAGE for the people of Long Ground.

The food problem. Mr. Rams could consider moving some stocks into houses on the high ground on Richmond Hill? Montserrat Springs Hotel.

A tarmac on a cricket pitch at St. John's or nearby area at Silver Hills may be the easiest and quickest way to gain an alternative to the threatened William Bramble Airport. Twin Otters may be able to land there even with the cross winds which blow.

Food distribution should be by food stamps and paid unemployment benefit, as will be given to those who go to the UK. This would restore some jobs in the retail and services sector.

Let us lease land at the north for fenced pastures, and feed the animals by hand. The agriculture department could supervise this. And why not begin a major agricultural revival by transferring top soil from the endangered areas into the less fertile and barren areas of the north?

Most of us are now convinced that our volcano will be blowing on and off for months and years. Let us use the quiet periods to maximum effect, before it is too late. ■

The Democracy Experiment

15th January, 2000

The recommendations of the Elections Commission have been posted on the Internet for several months, yet less than 10 percent of the electorate are aware of the details of the document. These recommendations have not been challenged or amended, and they may have already **been** adopted into the laws of Montserrat.

The executive summary does not state clearly how many candidates on the ballot paper the voter is allowed to select, and there is no indication of how the Chief Minister will be selected. One assumes that the existing arrangement will remain, in that the Chief Minister will be the individual who has the support of the majority of the elected representatives. If none of the manifest political parties gain **five** seats, then, similar to what happened after the last election, the **nine** elected will wheel and deal among themselves until the Chief, or what has become "The Minister of everything," is chosen.

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HEALTH PAGE**Options for the management of the renal complications of Diabetes Mellitus**

Diabetes is the commonest cause of end stage renal disease. Fifty percent of the new diabetic cases are due to non insulin dependent diabetes mellitus (NIDDM) which affects 75% of the diabetic population.¹ The onset of renal disease can be many years before diagnosis of NIDDM and should be looked for at presentation.

Diabetic Nephropathy was first described in 1859 by Greisinger, who recognised massive proteinuria in the absence of glycosuria as characteristic of end stage renal failure (ESRF). Overt diabetic nephropathy (dipstick positive proteinuria > 300 mg/24hrs) often heralds progressive renal disease in Insulin dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM), but this is not the case in NIDDM. Few NIDDM patients die from endstage renal failure. Their mortality is mainly due to cardiovascular disease and stroke.^{3, 4, 5}

Risk factors for ESRF in diabetic patients include: poor glycaemic control, systemic hypertension, smoking, increased plasma flow and capillary hypertension which produces hyper filtration and glomerular enlargement. Genetic and familial factors are accepted, but no specific evidence is available. Congenitally acquired vascular disease have been implicated in the cause of glomerular hypertension and glomerular damage.⁶

In the absence of retinopathy, renal disease in diabetics is mainly due to hypertensive renal disease, glomerulonephritis and chronic pyelonephritis. In older patients obstructive nephropathy, urinary infection and papillary necrosis are common. Ischaemic nephropathy, renal artery stenosis and cardiac disease are the other causes to be considered.²

Knowledge of these factors allow identification of those at risk. This is essential for the prevention, treatment and slowing of the progression of renal disease.

Good glycaemic control and strict control of blood pressure are critical. In NIDDM systolic blood pressure is more closely related to albuminuria than diastolic blood pressure.⁷ ACE inhibitors and calcium antagonists are effective in lowering blood pressure and urinary albumin excretion, but care should be taken not to treat those with renal artery stenosis with ACE inhibitors.⁸

Protein restriction may have a role in slowing or preventing the progression of microalbuminaemia, but the evidence is sparse.⁹

Surgical intervention is indicated for:- Patients who have surgically correctable causes of renal disease, such as obstructive nephropathy and renal artery stenosis. Patients referred for dialysis access or renal transplantation. Patients with any other surgical pathology.

The timing of the start of renal replacement therapy in diabetic patients with chronic renal failure is controversial. In some patients it is begun as emergency treatment for an episode of acute renal failure secondary to sepsis or hypotensive shock associated with concurrent illness, but the majority of patients in the Caribbean, gradually progress to a state of uraemia, hypo-proteinaemia, malnutrition, oedema and cardiac failure. 10, 11

Haemodialysis is offered to patients with End Stage Renal

Failure by several Caribbean governments. Diabetics are often excluded because of their age, or because the absence of satisfactory blood vessels for the formation of arterio-venous fistulae. This is compounded by the persisting bad habit of using these patient's cephalic veins for intravenous infusions. It is now accepted that, despite the risk of infection, all diabetic patients could have access to haemodialysis through the use of prosthetic grafts and permanent intravascular dialysis catheters.

Diabetes is one of the prognostic factors that significantly have adverse effect on survival and it is generally believed that haemodialysis should only be considered if survival on treatment is likely to exceed survival without treatment.

Peritoneal dialysis in a variety of methods is very effective. Intermittent peritoneal dialysis (IPD) and continuous ambulatory peritoneal dialysis (CAPD), are available, but costs are high. Annual costs range from US\$10,000 to \$20,000. The key is to achieve sufficient control of peritonitis rate. It has been shown that after adjusting for age, sex and co-morbid conditions, CAPD patients over age 66, have significantly lower risk of death than their haemodialysis counterparts.¹²

Renal transplantation offers the optimum care for the young diabetic with end stage renal disease. The use of corticosteroids and immunosuppressants produces a challenge for the control of diabetes and the infections which are more common in these patients, but reported results are encouraging, the survival rates of diabetic transplant recipients being similar to the rates of all recipients.¹³

Simultaneous kidney and pancreas transplantation is now regarded as a gold standard for the young diabetic with renal failure in developed countries. The optimum time for this operation is before the need for dialysis, when the serum creatinine is in the region of 300-400 umol/L and the GFR is 15-20 ml. The patient is nutritionally better able to cope with the rigours of the operation, and more likely to be able to return to work if transplanted before a prolonged period of employment.¹⁴ The alternative of renal transplantation with pancreatic islet cell transplantation is likely to become more popular. Islet cell transplantation is a rather minor procedure with much less risk than pancreas transplantation. However, the long term results are not yet comparable.¹⁵

Sadly, economic factors prevent the options of dialysis and renal transplantation from being available to all who need the service. Our focus must therefore remain on the prevention and slowing of the progression of renal disease, by rigid glycaemia control and strict control of blood pressure. My personal view is that, with predictions of over 20 million diabetics worldwide by year 2010, our approach should be different. Rather than a focus on providing new insulin or medications to enhance the effect of insulin, we should be looking for the underlying causes of beta cell and insulin end organ dysfunction. This may well be a simple inborn error of metabolism, which may be corrected by dietary alteration, such as is the case for phenylketonuria.

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Millennium Montserrat

24th December 1999

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to Montserratians and all readers of MAM. And a prosperous New Year to some Montserratians.

Not every one can afford to spend Christmas and bring in the New Year where they want to, but the spirit of cheer will be every where, whether it be in the cold terraces of Preston and Acton, the dusty volcanic sights of Salem and Friths, or the tropical splendour of Cudjoe Head and Banks. Also every where will be the spirit of "Hope" that more people will prosper, hope that the dark cloud will lift to reveal, as Chad's Rasta character said in the production 'Ash, The Second Falling'—"A Mountain full of goal".

The last days of the century on Montserrat are marked by a dark cloud hovering over a pulsing dome, and tremors in the North, which one missed if having a shower or riding a donkey at the time. The year ends with uncertainty and shaky confidence in the present pilots of our destiny. We witness the awesome power of the X and money, for the receiver and the giver respectively, in the determination of who the 'some' to prosper in 2000 and beyond will be.

The architects of modern democracy designed their concept to preserve social justice and equity. One wonders how they would react to the realisation that disenfranchisement can be achieved not only by manipulation of

constituency boundaries, and the restriction of domiciliary options, but also by increasing the choice of one man from one vote to nine votes.

Literally, in choosing nine, one will choose none.

"The interest of the public", "the good of the many", "the best for the people at the present time", are common pronouncements to justify self serving decisions, which ultimately preserve the status quo, and the power that dictates the choice of the 'some' for prosperity in Year 2000.

'Millennium Montserrat' could be a best selling game to replace Monopoly or Snakes and Ladders. A game of political intrigue, natural disaster and difficult deviding domination. The players are communities, and the variable assets would include :- businessmen, politicians, civil servants with guts, civil servants without guts, skilled professional persons (native and non-native), the tax man, dependent elderly and children, single women, unemployed unskilled labour, overseas consultants, the clergy, the use of a loaded dice, aid monies and elephants.

And what of the spirit of hope?. The spirit that may bring us a Year 2000, where every one has a chance to prosper, where the protection of minors does not require the

dispensable labels of 'official' and 'sworn'. Where collective responsibility and action avoids the need for resignation and the associated implication of admitted guilt.

A spirit of hope that generates the change that the Bear sings of, that delivers to us transparent, trustworthy and committed and visionary guidance that ends inappropriate use and haemorrhaging of the 75 million pounds.

Hope, that enough will be left to give us continuing employment opportunities, an airport, seaport, opened up new roads and residential areas in the safe northern area. Enough to bring our elderly folk out from the cold, isolation and exile. ■

The Democracy Experiment

(Continued from page 5)

Political scientists will be watching the progress of this novel system of universal suffrage in which "one man one vote" may be changed to "One man nine votes."

The voter, by giving equal support to several candidates, may end up voting out the very person he or she actually wishes to be their representative.

This experiment has already begun. Posturing, preparations, manipulations and manouverings to ensure victory under the new system are under way. Perhaps the delay in informing voters of the details of the adopted recommendations is part of the strategy.

I reckon that at least six months' notice will be needed to give all those wishing to vote a fair chance to make arrangements to do so, and this probably means that if any of the ministers were to jump ship on a matter of principle, the current leadership may be asked to continue as care taker for a prolonged period, even if there was no majority support in Legislative Council.

Most of us simple patriots thought that politics was supposed to be the selection of a government that would represent the interests of the majority. A government that would make decisions and manage the resources of the electorate, for the betterment of all, especially those under-privileged and disadvantaged. We now know that the Caribbean interpretation is probably "the selection of the few who win the right to distribute the wealth and resources of the community, among themselves and their supporters."

This process has undermined the very principles of democracy. Instead of promoting "equity" and "justice," we see increasing differences in opportunities and assets, and a disregard for the very systems of government which are meant to preserve equity and justice. No wonder civil servants find themselves unable to do the jobs that they are trained for, and inclined to enter the race for political power. With the kind of salaries and allowances available for Ministers

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of Government, any professional with ambition and a conscience should have a go, and then give their service to the people of Montserrat for free.

The counting game has begun, and with it the uncertainties of the outcome. The numbers for voters and candidates. The persons who may be better choice for leadership, may not even get a look in. Those who cannot assemble a team of five won't have a chance.

Three groups are emerging, the three M Parties: The Money Party, The Management Party, and the Moral Party. Some individuals think they would fit into all three, and some cannot fit into any.

The most exciting of the recommendations, is the proposal for a Minister responsible for "Montserratians Overseas." This will be a golden opportunity for someone, not to secure a personal fortune or use the position to secure a political future, but to make a difference in the long-term future of Montserrat. The coordination of our fit young sports men and women, who now have access to first class training opportunities, could make the Montserrat teams the best in the Caribbean; and coordination of the services of our skilled professionals could have the effect of diverting a larger proportion of project funds into further investment within Montserrat. The promotion of Montserrat's tourism, industrial and other products should also be greatly enhanced by this change.

As usual the incumbents have an advantage — control of the media and influence on the disbursement of state funds. The United Kingdom budgetary cuts will serve to reduce the purse available to the incumbent ministers. This may level the playing field, but this measure may in fact be to the advantage of incumbents. Cutbacks in expenditure may not only precipitate the departure of the less favoured, who must migrate to get work, but also prevent the return of the exiled who have no place to live.

A saving grace will be the slowing of the haemorrhage of British taxpayers' money into projects destined to be dead elephants.

Political analysts should find this Montserrat Democracy Experiment interesting, and should now make reservations for rooms at the luxurious Tropical Mansion Suites Hotel, so as to witness the pre-election activities.

In the last election in 1996, 58% of registered voters went to the polls and the ruling four, 2 parties and 1 independent, represented a minority vote of 32% of all registered voters. That experiment failed. Will this new experiment be any better? ■

B.O.T New Jewels of The Empire

February 4, 2000

My passport describes me as British, British Dependent Territories Citizen, but inside is an additional stamp which states "Holder is Entitled to Readmission to the United Kingdom".

My frequent travels between Barbados and Montserrat provide eight to 10 large immigration stamps each month, so the pages are running out and soon I will have to apply for a new passport. Perhaps the new one will describe me as a British Overseas Territory Citizen, with

right of abode in the UK. But why not just 'British Citizen,' since all British Citizens have right of abode and work in any British territory?

The British Government has complied with the demands of the United Nation Decolonisation Committee, which directed that there should be no colonies by the year 2000, however the people of Caribbean B.O.Ts, other than Bermuda, were not given a choice.

One may argue that the omission of a referendum on the issue of independence at a general election makes the current constitutional status null and void unless it is ratified by the current or the next Legislative Council. In short a referendum on independence should be held at the next general election, and the people of Montserrat made fully aware of the consequences of their choice.

The Caribbean B.O.Ts, especially Montserrat, may become the New Jewels of the Empire. If predictions on global climate changes over the next 100 years come true, the tropical location and the mountainous ranges of our paradise will realise it's true price. The once barren desolate northern bluffs of Montserrat have been revitalised by the new volcanic ash topsoil and are beginning to take on the verdant fertile features of the rest of the island. This, the only part of Montserrat that no more receives any ash falls and is totally out of reach and free of any danger from the volcano, is now valued at 30¢ per square foot but is destined to command over \$10 per square foot some time in the future.

This area is waiting for developments, which may incorporate 10,000 family units — escapees from the hostile colder northern parts of our planet, Montserrat nationals in the USA, Canada and Europe, who wish to keep a stake of their tropical paradise.

So what makes Montserrat such a special B.O.T.? The volcano, of course; not for its beauty or spectacle, but for what it did before.

It created the plains that provided the best location for the Blackburne/William Bramble Airport. The recent volcanic flows have filled the ghauts, and removed the residential areas of Spanish Point, Trants, Farms and Bethel, and now present a relatively isolated area, ideal for a military base - the Caribbean equivalent of Ascension Island, a base half way between the North and South Poles for NATO governments to use without landing fees or local restrictions.

Langs Soufriere Volcano, just as it has in the past, will go back to sleep and its slopes become once again green. It is this potential as a Caribbean aviation platform in the long term which may be driving the persistence with the preparations in that area, despite the threatening dome. We should welcome this as this would allow the repopulation of houses at Richmond Hill, Foxes Bay, Weekes and Cork Hill in 30 - 40 years time, but there is no reason why such a development cannot co-exist with an airport at Thatch Valley. In the short term, it is mandatory for us to get a landing strip at Gerald's for fixed wing aircraft, roads and utilities into the northern area, an all weather seaport, a Montserrat Hilton Hotel in place of the Good Life.

These are needed for the immediate development of our economy and existence.

And what about the ratbats? They can keep the caves on the chuff sides. Just like those occupying the powder magazines on St. George's Hill, they will be there long after you and I are long gone.

These is no future without dreams but every now and then one must wake up and share those dreams so that our leaders and brothers can be enlightened. ■