

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

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FJM--21 Jamaica II
A political overview

Mr. Richard Nolte
Executive Director
Institute of Current World Affairs
535 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10017.

Dear Mr. Nolte:

Traditionally, Jamaica has been recognized as the touchstone of West Indian (British Caribbean) politics. Sister states throughout the region have followed Jamaica's historic slave rebellions in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. The popular uprising in Morant Bay in 1865 and the labour strikes begun at Frome in 1937 also created reverberations throughout the Caribbean. Indeed, there is great significance in the fact that Jamaica was the first British Caribbean Territory to gain full independence in 1962. (Only recently has Jamaica's paramount place been challenged by Trinidad's ardent regionalists and radical activists who are setting the direction for political patterns of the future.) Further, such historical presence in the politics of the region has been naturally re-enforced by Jamaica's relative economic wealth, size and population when compared to the Eastern Caribbean.

As a result, Jamaican politics are first characterised by an ingrained sense of arrogant nationalism, a nationalism which accounts for the island's political insularity and its reluctance to fashion any binding ties with the rest of the Caribbean. This Jamaican nationalism is critically recognized though grudgingly accepted by the other Caribbean states. And no better tribute has been made to that nationalism or its effect on the nine other Caribbean states than Dr. Eric Williams' remark on learning of Jamaica's withdrawal from their aborted Federation: "Ten minus one equals zero."

Another pair of historical factors are perhaps more pertinent to contemporary Jamaican politics. The first is the traditional importance of small, middle class protest groups composed of teachers, lawyers and other professionals. As early as 1900 such groups, exemplified by the Jamaica Union of Teachers (founded 1894) and the Jamaica Progressive League (founded 1936) were waging extremely effective campaigns against British rule.

The significance of the JUT and the League is the fact that they represented the nationalist movement of the Jamaican middle class and that such organisations and individuals subsequently formed the basis of one of the two major political parties (the People's National Party) operating in contemporary Jamaica. Thus the genesis of the PNP being the JUT and the League is vital to understanding its original characteristics: an emphasis on ideology (when compared to Jamaica's other political party, the Jamaica Labour Party); organization stressing long range planning; and leadership drawn mainly from the middle class.

In addition to this, however, while the origin of the PNP may have been the JUT and the League, the character of the Party is rooted in the nature of the man who dominated it for nearly 25 years, Norman W. Manley.

Norman Washington Manley was born on July 4, 1893. He spent most of his early years on a farm in Granaboa Vale, attended school nearby, became a star athlete, excellent scholar and finally won a Rhodes Scholarship to Jesus College Oxford. At Oxford, Manley read law and acquired First Class Honours. Returning to Jamaica in 1922, the young graduate was admitted to the bar and spent the next sixteen years acquiring a reputation as one of the most capable barristers in the country.

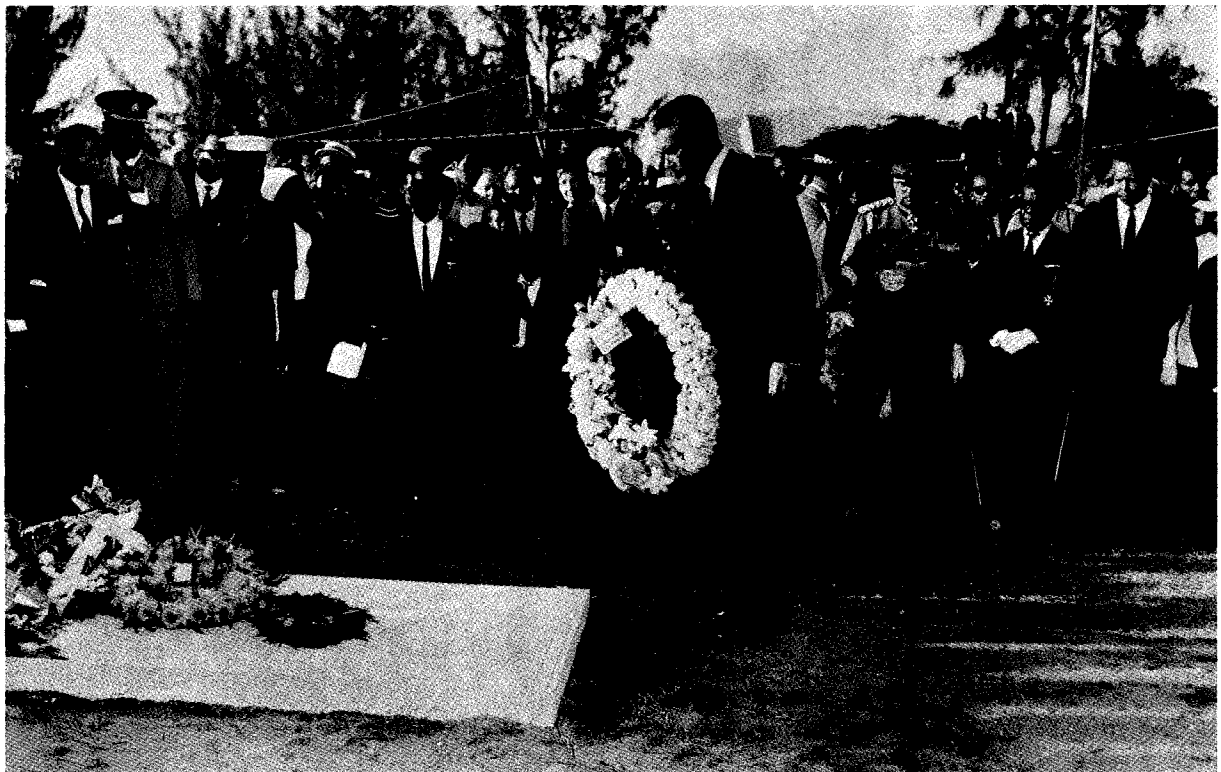
It wasn't until 1938, however, that Norman Manley became active in Jamaica politics. As with Grantley Adams in Barbados, Manley's activism originated with the strikes of 1938 which immobilized Jamaica and the rest of the Caribbean. That year, 1938, was a watershed for Caribbean history, a year in which men arose who would be the leaders of the nationalist movements from Jamaica to Guyana.

In Jamaica, Manley, Frank and Ken Hill, Richard Hart and others organized the militantly nationalistic People's National Party, a Party which was ideologically committed to socialism and which in time worked out the mechanics of economic change in those terms. Concomitant with policy, PNP leadership recognized that their middle class base was too narrow to appeal to the mass of Jamaican voters. As a result, a labour arm which originated as a Trade Union Council, later named the National Workers Union, was appended to the Party structure.

With research groups appointed, planning committees, policy and propaganda were generated by the PNP. And as the NWU continued to grow, gain more bargaining rights and attract funds the PNP became the first example of a modernized ideological movement in West Indian politics. Significantly, apart from the alliance with or formation of a labour organization, the PNP's example inspired Eric Williams' organizational programme for his People's National Movement in Trinidad.



Above: Norman Manley at work and with his wife Edna, 1955.
Below: The Burial of Norman Washington Manley, Michael, his son lays a wreath on the Grave as the Prime Minister, Hugh Shearer looks on (extreme right).





Nevertheless, for all its activism, it was not until the Party had purged from its ranks the more leftist elements (the Hill brothers and Richard Hart) and contested two losing elections that the PNP was finally victorious at the polls. In the national elections of 1955 and then again in 1959, Manley's PNP scored electoral triumphs and took charge of the Government. In 1961 however, the Parliamentary Opposition called for a referendum on the issue of Jamaica's participation in the West Indies Federation. Manley, an avowed regionalist consented, then was rejected by 40,000 votes. In quick succession his PNP lost the 1962 general elections, transferred the Government to the JLP and watched Independence come in August of 1962. When the Country became fully autonomous, Norman Manley at the age of 69, the principal architect of Jamaican nationalism, was forced to take the place of the Leader of the Loyal Opposition. Since that time that is where the PNP has remained.

The second historical tradition essential to the development of Jamaican politics is the trade union. Beginning in 1938, this form of mass organisation played a very significant role in mobilizing political support in favour of self-rule. No other figure could better illustrate this type of effort than Alexander Bustamante, founder of the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union and subsequently, the Jamaica Labour Party. Born in 1884, the son of an Irish planter and a Jamaican mother, Bustamante had no education, left Jamaica at 19 years of age and wandered around the world until he was 48. In that time he managed to be a member of the Cuban Police Force, a tramway inspector in Panama and a dietician in a New York hospital. He also lived in Puerto Rico, Canada and Spain. In Spain, he changed his name from Clark, the name of his father, to Bustamante.

Bustamante first attracted the public's attention by writing long letters to the Press attacking the poor economic conditions of the 1930's; and then expanding his activity from letter writing, he began to address public gatherings on the Kingston streets.

It was the events of 1938, however, which established Bustamante as the island's most charismatic labour union leader. Low wages, unemployment, sugar production slumping, bananas with Leafspot disease, large migration from the country into the city of Kingston: this was the background to the 1938 strikes and riots. Bustamante began addressing the workers. They responded and he led them in protest marches. In one case on May 23, people listening to Bustamante refused to move when ordered by police. The Inspector of Police ordered his men to fire into the crowd. Bustamante, opening his shirt, stepped in front of the crowd, asking the police to shoot at him instead of the people. The police held fire and the crowd moved on.



Above: Bustamante leading a Labour Day march in 1950.
Below: Bustamante addressing a crowd during the 1938 strikes which brought him to power (right). As Prime Minister, Sir Alexander Bustamante escorts Princess Margaret at the flag raising ceremony marking Jamaican Independence, 1962.

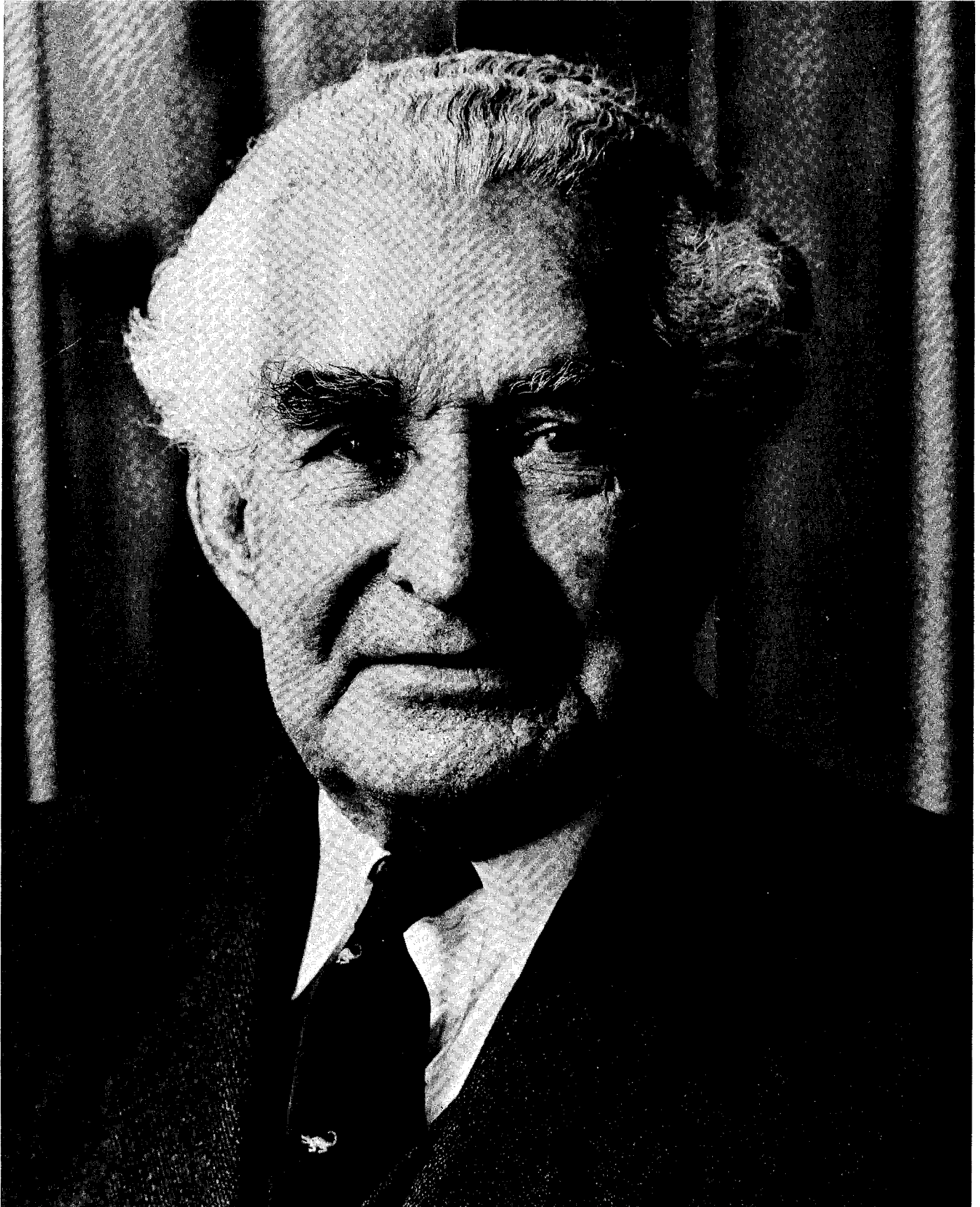


Finally, he was arrested, released (because of the efforts of his cousin, Norman Manley), arrested again, then tried and jailed for seventeen months. Nevertheless, Busta's organizational skills had left him a massive labour union base, and upon his release from prison, he proceeded to organize a political party in order to contest the 1944 elections. Not surprisingly, Bustamante's party, the Jamaica Labour Party, won 22 out of the total 32 seats and seized control of the Government. The JLP with Busta as Chief Minister held power until defeated by Manley's PNP in the elections of 1955. But six years later, Busta returned as Prime Minister at the head of a victorious JLP. Soon after that triumph, Bustamante was knighted by the Queen and then retired from active politics, leaving his party colleagues to continue running the Government and the JLP. Today, at 86, Bustamante is still President of the JLP's labour base, the Bustamante Industrial Trades Union, and his party still rules.

In contrast to the PNP-NWU alliance, the JLP-BITU organization was the creation of a single individual, Alexander Bustamante. The party became an extension of his personality, with planning, organization and policy making personified in the union leader. For example, when in opposition to the PNP, Busta told the people that the JLP was the defender of their little plot of land and animals. He explained to the small land owners in the hill country that if they wanted to retain ownership of their little plots, the JLP would have to be returned to power. Thus, it was precisely this ability to relate to the instincts of the people, to understand their conservatism and to exploit the middle class, ideological orientation of the PNP which made Busta so successful.

Actually, however, when in control of the Government, neither party differed from the other in the general approach to Jamaica's economic or social problems. They were roughly the same. As time went on, Manley's socialism began to lose much of the language and posture of the ideological left he suggested he represented. Instead, the PNP would have been better described as a liberal party patterned on the British Labour Party. As Gordon Lewis, a West Indian political writer rightly argued, "few things in Jamaica are more comic than the fury with which the PNP black proletarian assaulted the JLP black proletarian--for Jamaican politics have been, and still are, essentially a Dickensian mock-encounter between Tweedledum and Tweedledee".

One can understand, however, why the rest of the Caribbean viewed Jamaica with envy or awe when confronted with two leaders of the Manley-Bustamante mould. The two were bigger than their party organizations and in their absence (Norman Manley died last year, Bustamante has retired from politics) Jamaican politics has taken on a different texture. Nevertheless, though there are new leaders with new approaches, politics is still essentially a contest between men, and the personalities of the contestants will continue to be the crucial factor in determining which of the two parties will





With Alexander Bustamante's retirement, the leadership of the JLP and its labour wing, the BITU, was officially passed to Hugh Lawson Shearer, who is now Prime Minister. Unofficially, however, the Government is a collective leadership exercised by Shearer and two others, the Minister of Trade and Industry, Robert Lightbourne and the Minister of Finance and Planning, Edward Seaga. Together these three men represent the most powerful figures in the JLP organization.

At 45, Shearer is the youngest Prime Minister in the Caribbean. He was born in 1923, attended school in Jamaica and then moved into the BITU as a journalist on the Union's weekly, The Jamaica Worker. It was a natural step for Shearer then to move into Trade Union organizing and finally to contest a seat on behalf of the JLP. In the general elections of 1955, Shearer ran and won for the JLP in the West Kingston constituency, the same seat which Bustamante had previously represented but had vacated to run elsewhere. Then in 1960, Busta promoted Shearer to the position of Vice President of the BITU, second only to himself, the Life President-General. When Bustamante decided to retire, he asked Shearer to run in his old South Clarendon constituency and then on April 11, 1967, Shearer became the third Prime Minister of Jamaica.

Shearer's strength lies in his BITU-Union base and in the fact that Bustamante, his cousin, thinks highly of him. He has ability as a negotiator and spokesman for his side, attributes he demonstrated many times as a labour leader and then as Head of Jamaica's Mission to the United Nations. The Prime Minister is not a very subtle man, however. For example, his attitude toward the build up of crime in Jamaica is reflected in his instructions to the police (who are renowned for their reluctance to wait for a Judge before passing sentence themselves): "Do not recite the Beatitudes when you are dealing with criminals".

The Minister of Trade and Industry, Robert Lightbourne, is the man generally responsible for Government's policy regarding the Bauxite and manufacturing industries. This is a central position to which Lightbourne brings a great deal of sophistication and ability. He is, however, convinced that the work of the Jamaica Industrial Development Corporation (the source of Incentive Legislation) and time will curb the pressures building up in the over-crowded streets of Kingston and in the poorer villages throughout the hills of Jamaica. Lightbourne is also very popular throughout the Caribbean and is known to be more of a regionalist than his colleagues, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance. This, of course, goes against the grain of JLP policy, and reflects a broader vision than most Jamaican politicians have.



However, the shrewdest and most powerful mind in the JLP and one of the most unique politicians in the Caribbean today is the Minister of Finance and Planning, Edward Seaga. Now in his early forties, Seaga is a Jamaican Syrian who attended school in Jamaica and then went to Harvard where he intended to study physics but later switched to do a B.A. in sociology. Returning to Jamaica and deciding to continue his studies, Seaga did an M.A. in sociology at the University of the West Indies. There, he studied under the highly-regarded West Indian sociologist, M. G. Smith. Seaga's thesis was a study of the revival cults in Jamaica.

Although he is a white Syrian, Seaga decided to do his research in the poorest section of black urban Jamaica, West Kingston. Living there, he began to understand what he calls the "inner Jamaica", the Jamaica which does not communicate in Western terms or act on Western models. The insights Seaga developed from his studies were later to serve him politically as he began to take a greater interest in the social questions effecting the people of West Kingston.

While in West Kingston, Seaga broke what political affiliation he had maintained with the PNP (which he characterized as a "brown man's party") and instead offered his services to Alexander Bustamante during the crucial 1961 Referendum on Federation. This bit of political organizing was rewarded with the opportunity to run for the JLP seat in West Kingston in the subsequent elections held in 1962. Surprisingly, Seaga won, perhaps because he had faced a weak PNP candidate.

But in 1967, the PNP decided to go after Seaga. They called upon a brilliant black barrister, Dudley Thompson, to contest the West Kingston seat for the Party. Thompson donned African garb and took the name of "Burning Spear" in hopes of cultivating the fact that he was a black man running in a black constituency against a white Syrian. Nevertheless, Seaga continued to quietly and efficiently organize his constituency. He knew every household and had his constituency mapped out block by block. He won. And for the first time in the history of Jamaican politics the West Kingston people voted to return the same man twice, something not even Hugh Shearer had been able to contrive. (Shearer lost the second time he attempted to run as an incumbent.)

Today, Edward Seaga is the most firmly entrenched politician in Jamaica. He has computerized every member of his constituency: name, nickname, occupation, party affiliation (no one in West Kingston is foolish enough to be a PNP supporter) and whether dues have been paid to the JLP. Every Friday night beginning at six o'clock, Seaga goes into his constituency and anyone who wants to have a private talk

(or needs a private disciplining) is heard. Throughout the area he has his selected "branch men" who report to him on any new developments.

Since he has been their representative, Seaga has provided his West Kingston people with what must be the most comprehensive community center in the Caribbean. The center, called Tivoli Gardens, includes a health clinic, recreation facilities, meeting rooms and a library. It is also interesting to note that the money provided for the project was collected through subscriptions "donated" by local merchants and Kingston Corporations. There are, however, no records or lists of names of the men who responded to the subscriptions other than in Edward Seaga's private files.

Some say Mr. Seaga is a ruthless man. They credit him, correctly, with being able to call upon 50 thugs at a moment's notice. (The PNP call these thugs Seaga's "guinea gogs".) Others say that in a crisis the one to emerge as the most powerful man in the country would be Seaga. These people refer to him as "Napoleon" for they believe he has the potential to become the island's first dictator. On the other hand, one very effective radical at the University suggested that Seaga has the capability "to become the Caribbean's most effective Social Democrat". In reply to all this, Seaga claims that he would prefer to remain the Minister of Finance, "a job that is very rewarding and not simply representational". Besides, the support Seaga has in West Kingston is solid but he is not very well known in rural Jamaica--a situation which suits his JLP colleagues.

Seaga's real power stems from his understanding of the Jamaican "ethos"; from his knowledge of and ability to use the machinery of the Civil Service; from the fact that he inspires very capable people to work very hard for him; because he is uncorrupted (unlike most of the other JLP politicians), feared, shrewd and is the first truly modern politician to emerge from the JLP. As a result, Seaga has been able to use his knowledge of sociology, demography, computers, welfare, polls, the pork barrel and muscle (when needed) to acquire and utilize power.

Seaga is not selfish with such techniques, however. And in fact he has made it a point to demonstrate his computer system to his JLP colleagues. This is an added dimension which Seaga's presence in the JLP adds to the Party. More simply, he is a modernizing agent in a Party which, before he came along, badly needed some modernization. Bustamante's greatest strength was his ability to attract mass support; but his greatest weakness was his inability to formulate plans or delineate authority. In fact, Busta distrusted plans, planning and organization. Thus when he left the JLP, Busta's absence could have created havoc for the Party.



Seaga's computerization, planning and effectiveness, both in the Party organization as well as in the Ministry of Finance has ensured the staying power of the JLP. This is essentially why a white Syrian can be so powerful in a black populist Party.

Physically, Seaga is not a very imposing man. Nor is he very charismatic when he speaks before an audience. But in public or in private he comes across as efficient and at the same time willing to listen and learn. When arguing his position, Seaga's points come directly and without flair. For example, when discussing the very critical question of how he views change:

"The social science chaps at the University of the West Indies are too imbedded in their textbooks as source material. As one who has done both text book work and field work, I think those men should do more field work. The textbooks suffer from theory which is not really based on West Indian communities. But if you want change, how to go about it? Wiping the slate clean is not progress. The alternative is to reshape the society. In a country with few political traditions, with political experience which begins only in 1938, huge doses of change will not work. It would be the pendulum effect: big change one way, then big change the other, back and forth. Finally we may end up a few steps forward after having lost a great deal of time and effort. As for me, I am not interested in ideology. An ideology is a framework of thought. I am more interested in the dynamics of action, pace and direction. I would rather see quiet evolution than dramatic revolution for Jamaica."

Seaga's approach to change was clearly outlined in his Ministry's 1969/70 Budget. In it were a few "evolutionary changes", a few of which caused some stir in the business community of Kingston. The most controversial of these measures was a new tax on company profits. The idea was to force business into investing more and paying less in dividends, thus creating more jobs and continuing what Seaga calls his "Jamaicanisation programmes". Seaga's counterpart in Trinidad, A.N.R. Robinson had tried to do much the same thing but found too much opposition in the business sector. Later Robinson was shifted from the Finance Ministry to External Affairs. (see FJM--13: Trinidad, Dr. Politics and the PNM)

Apparently, however, Seaga has been able to push his tax through and has fared better than his Trinidadian colleague. In summing up this episode, Seaga rightly noted that "Jamaica's tax structure, company wise, is not overly burdensome; and besides one should recall that the Tower of Babel collapsed because the base was too narrow".

Seaga in contrast to Lightbourne, is recognized as a Jamaican nationalist. This is a deep thing with most Jamaicans, but with Seaga it is based upon what he considers a realistic approach to the individual problems of the Caribbean states.

"There is little chance, so far as I see it, of any political integration of the Caribbean. I don't know of any island federation which has worked. A regional center which the majority of the population never even see is only one of the many hurdles. What the people know is the number one priority for any political act."

Originally, the BITU-JLP alliance was composed of the rural peasants, urban unemployed and workers in the agricultural sector of the economy. But as the NWU-PNP forces moved to consolidate skilled industrial workers, particularly in the bauxite industry, Bustamante felt his hold on labour threatened and moved to counter with continuous pressure. As a first step, he sought financial assistance from Kingston business and wealthy merchants assuring them that the JLP was less a threat to them than the leftist PNP. In this regard he was successful. Financiers such as Ashenheim and the DeCostas backed Bustamante and thus assured themselves some control over his party. As a result, the JLP became that odd political phenomenon: a populist-business Party.

Busta's second step was of course to move against the NWU and attempt to secure its bargaining rights in the industrial sectors. Bargaining rights are the life blood of a labour union. Without them no union can claim to represent a single worker. But bargaining rights are difficult to obtain and even more difficult to hold. It is as though the labour leader must face a continual election before his workers, convincing them that labour is best represented by a given union. Often the test of that fact is reduced to power and force of personality. On rare occasions violence is the result.

In this instance, Bustamante and his successors have been unsuccessful. For 15 years, the NWU has maintained its hold on the crucial bauxite industry, maintaining thereby the union base for the PNP. The principal reason for BITU failure has been one man, Michael Manley.

Outside of Hugh Shearer, Robert Lightbourne and Edward Seaga, there is only one other politician in Jamaica who could be said to be truly powerful in his own right. That would be Michael Manley, second son of Norman Manley, Island Supervisor of the NWU, Head of the PNP and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament.

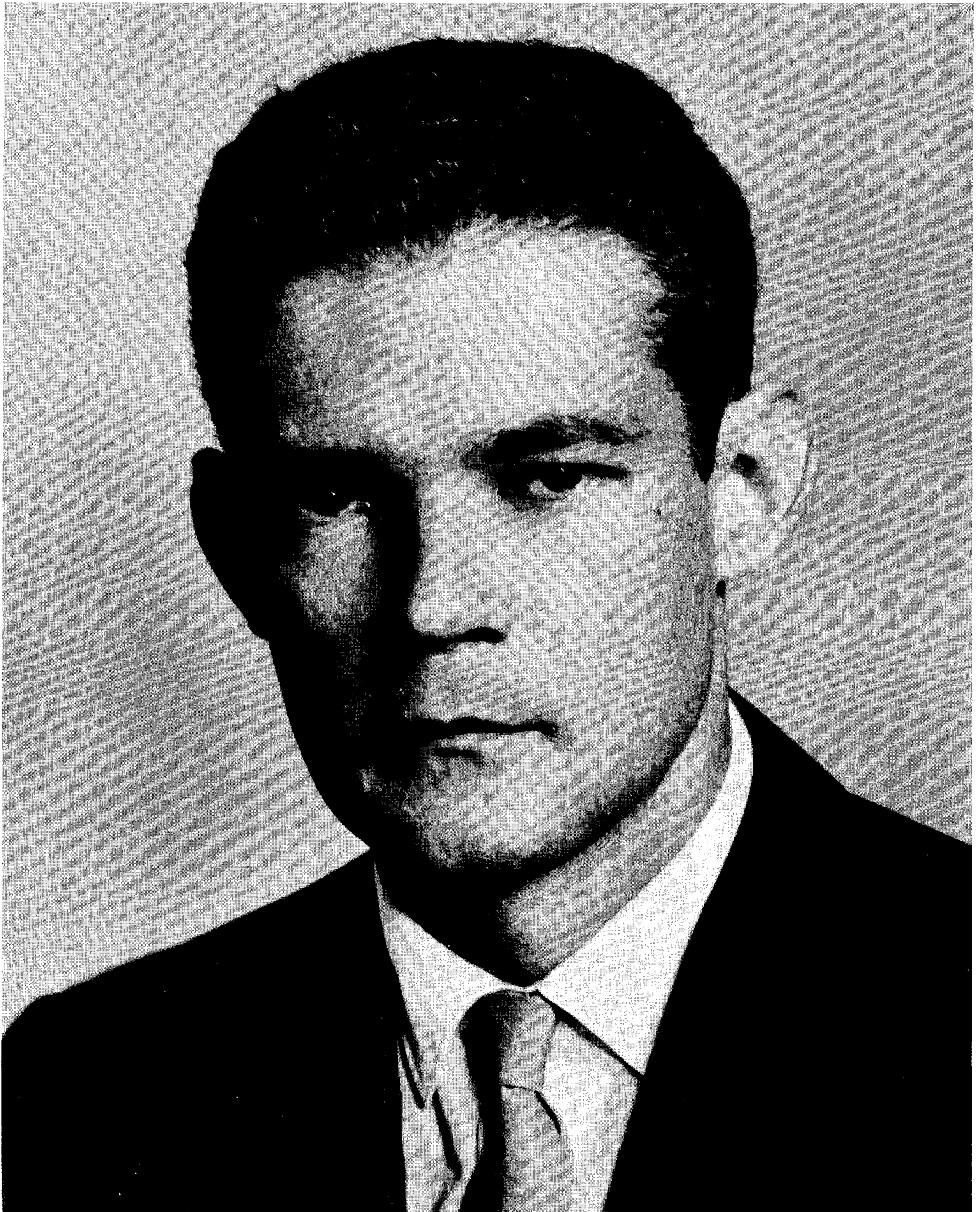
Michael Manley, Joshua to his followers, is a tall, physically impressive man. Open, direct and enthusiastic, he is one of the most charismatic and likable politicians one could hope to meet in the West Indies. He is also the single most important reason why the NWU-PNP structure has held together until today.

Early on, when his father was guiding the affairs of the Party structure, Michael began working as a trade union organizer. He showed incredible ability and through no fault of his name soon came to be recognized as the best qualified man to assume the leadership of the NWU. From that position, he has ensured the labour support the PNP has maintained in spite of all the efforts of the BITU. Perhaps the most explicit example of this was the very significant confrontation of the NWU and the BITU at ALPART.

ALPART is the largest alumina plant to be built outside the United States. It sits on a 300 acre site surrounded by 26,000 acres of Jamaica. Here, the NWU had secured the bargaining rights for the plant's construction. It was also here, however, that the BITU leadership had decided to test the NWU. Beginning in April, 1967, the BITU served notice that it was making a formal claim for the bargaining rights to production work. By June of the same year, having failed to hold a poll of the workers, an attempt was made to shoot Manley. In fact, the two NWU supporters who were with him at the time were wounded. Then in March 1968, guns appeared on the construction site and a strike was called in the name of the BITU. If the plant remained shut down and the "strike" sustained, the BITU could claim control of the workers.

The man who engineered the work stoppage and who later became the BITU spokesman was the young and very able Pearnel Charles. Charles is a close associate of Edward Seaga and has a special role in the West Kingston constituency. At first the BITU's intention was to test worker reaction to a BITU bid. No thought had been given to sustaining the stoppage. But after the first day, it appeared that maybe the workers and the NWU might be intimidated enough to allow the stoppage to continue. No one appeared to take the workers back to work.

Meanwhile, Michael Manley was facing a series of personal crises which most men would have found emotionally paralysing. His father was to retire from politics and Michael was contesting for the leadership of the PNP. His wife had also just died and his father was to die a year later. On top of all this, if he were to allow the BITU strategy to work and the NWU lost ALPART, it would be the beginning of the end for the PNP and Michael Manley.



The drive from Kingston to Mandeville where ALPART has located is two hours. Early on the morning of the second day both Manley and Charles left Kingston for the ALPART site. Both realised that a personal confrontation was to come that morning and both knew that much was at stake.

For Manley, however, the pressure was greater. As one high-ranking NWU official said: "Pearnel is utterly unscrupulous, has a lot of charisma and means to go a long way in a hell of a hurry". What better way than to take on and beat one of the finest union leaders in the country. For Pearnel Charles, it was a test and a learning experience. For Manley it was a career at stake. "I would have been nothing but a back number had I lost", Manley said later.

The main gate at ALPART is a large open space. On one side that morning Charles set up his microphone and not far away, Manley erected his. Charles was there first and speaking when Manley arrived. Moving to his stand, Manley paused and then spoke for five minutes before the 2,000 silent workers. Then, as he later described it, Manley abandoned what was meant to be a twenty minute speech and ordered: "Those who are going back to work, follow me." A trickle and then a surge followed Manley through the opening gate, and the plant was his.

Following the ALPART confrontation, Manley was elected to the Presidency of the PNP. As a result, he must take on the added difficulties of refurbishing the Party structure while, at the same time making sure that the flanks of the union don't start to crumble. Either is an all-consuming task and eventually there is little doubt that Manley will have to appoint a successor to himself as Island Supervisor of the NWU. Meanwhile he has the problems of the Party to occupy his energies.

The major item is a problem of image. Manley feels that the PNP has been identified as an ideological rather than "functional" organization for too long. Consequently he and the PNP leadership are attempting to reshape that image by stressing reform of existing institutions and playing down the controversial issues such as land reform and rationalization of the sugar industry. A new emphasis will be placed on drawing the public into policy making. In other words, the PNP is in trouble.

Nevertheless, Joshua is the most important factor the PNP has going for it. To see Manley standing on the front steps of wooden rum shops in the hill country of Jamaica, to listen to him speak before a night-time rally in a village lit by lanterns, is to understand how the man has power with the people. He uses metaphors, slips into poetry, biblical passages and then punctuates the night with phrases only the

hill people can speak or understand. The crowd breaks into laughter and some shouts, "Joshua". Somehow, when Manley says "whisper", it sounds as though it's never been said that way before.

In essence, Michael Manley is not an ideologue. He's more at home with people, speaking to the villages late at night, tired after having toured the countryside all day long. His Party needs new ideas, new blood, younger people. And Manley recognizes this. But the younger thinkers at the University of the West Indies are not happy about the conservative tendencies of the PNP and they reject the idea. Thus, Manley can only hope that the people of Jamaica respond to his person, that the duller and less interesting figures in the JLP dissipate the Government's appeal.

In general then, what is happening in Jamaican politics is a blending of policies, styles and methods of organisation. As Seaga pulls the JLP into the modern world, Manley is trying to personalize the PNP. The two are showing grey. The young view neither with great relish--though often one hears that maybe, there is more chance for change with the JLP; that there is more danger of dictatorship and corruption, but that there is also a hint of hidden radicalism below the surface. Others have abandoned all hope for the party structures but recognize the power of the labour movement. So in many instances, very talented young men are gravitating to the unions where they hope they might be able to seize the fulcrum of power.

It is a debatable point, however, whether the unions, as opposed to the political parties, are the fulcrum of power, or if it is the other way around. Whatever, it is certain that both are inexorably linked and that the leadership of the one is the leadership of the other.

If anyone suffers from this marriage, however, it must be the Jamaican workers. The problem is obvious. The Prime Minister, who is both head of the Government and President of the BITU, cannot give undivided attention or make policy decisions on behalf of the Union. The Prime Minister put it this way:

"I claim that I am able to talk to you--the working class people of this country--as one of you. And particularly because I am one of you, I am confident that you will accept and understand that in the exercise of the authority vested in me as Prime Minister of Jamaica, from time to time when I make decisions, these decisions will be in the interest of the nation; and however much these decisions may be unpopular, I want the entire working-class and other sections of the community to understand at all times that as Prime Minister, I cannot seek and will never seek to butter nor to please any clique or section in this country to the detriment of the

This is, of course, the problem with all political unionism. Once union leadership assumes political power, the leadership comes under all sorts of different pressures counter to labour's interests. This is particularly so in a capitalist economy where management lobbying is formidable. In this last respect, Jamaica is a prime example.

There are some indications of growing concern about this problem in the ranks of the two large unions. It is confined, however, to a few, mainly younger, men. In the NWU, one of the younger officials expressed a cautious estimate that "the Trade Union Movement is not as strong as it should be and there are some in our ranks who feel that the voice of the worker is not strong enough in the councils of the PNP". In the BITU, there is less concern about the problem of political unionism but more interest on the part of younger elements to replace older men who do not seem able to cope with modern administrative practices. In sum, it is clear that the brighter and more able men who are now entering the Trade Union Movement are doing so with the intention of using the unions as quick avenues into electoral politics.

In the last year, however, a movement has developed which calls for the separation of trade unionism from politics. In Jamaica it is called the "Splinter Movement". Surprisingly, it has been met with some sympathy amongst the Jamaican workers, particularly in the maritime, transport and banana industries. Not so surprisingly, it has also been a quietly popular movement with management.

The leader of the "Movement" is raucous, articulate and very hard working Milton "Scully" Scott.

"My dream is to organize a total working class movement based on working class interests. In Jamaica, there is no wage policy, no educational plan, no office in the country-side, no health schemes and very few services. Each year the NWU and the BITU collect at least \$40 million in dues. And these dues go into the pockets of the politicians."

Scott is a 35 year old Jamaican, a graduate of the London School of Economics and a former NWU organizer. After 18 months with the Union, Scott left. ("I found that the NWU wasn't a real trade union.") He began organizing on his own. From September 1968 to January 1969, Scott gathered the support of roughly 6,000 workers (there are 200,000 unionized workers in Jamaica), most of them in his Jamaica Maritime Union. Then in January 1969, Scott attempted to break into the BITU hold on the hotel workers employed in the North Coast tourist industries. In this he was unsuccessful. Yet later in the year he was able to gather significant support from dock workers loading bananas. This action caused the Government to close down three of the ports employed for banana shipments.

Scott is alone, however, and up against very organised and powerfully entrenched trade unions. There is validity in what he says; but there is also tough opposition.

"For thirty-one years there has been no progressive labour legislation. The worker's job is not his own property. And the workers have discovered that when the union leadership become politicians, labour becomes secondary."

Scott is also about the only radical voice breaking the traditional but unarticulated conservatism of the NWU-BITU. This, perhaps, could be the basis of his appeal to the workers who realize that consistently the two political parties have kept the lid on labour's rights in deference to foreign and local capital.

"In a developing country, such are the conditions that no labour union which is dedicated to free enterprise can be pro-worker. For to attract capital the country must offer 'free' labour. The working class, wages, social rights are all considered secondary to the need to cater to investors."

Perhaps this implied threat to capitalism by a labour union leader is the reason why American Labour has been willing to supply funds, friendship and other assistance to the NWU-BITU over the course of the past decade. For there is evidence that the United Steel Workers Union of America either directly or through the Geneva-based International Metalworkers' Federation, have been channeling scholarships, training programmes, building funds and money for strike-support to the NWU. There is also some evidence that New York Local III of the U.S. Electrical Workers Union has supplied funds to the BITU. The fact that such relationships and assistance exist is evident; the reasons underlying American Labour's involvement in Jamaica are less clear.

The forms of U.S. Labour's involvement in Jamaica have been varied. The United Steel Workers have, for example, paid the salaries of some NWU officials or provided them with travel grants and training programmes. The Steel Workers also provided a soft loan (\$10,000) which helped cover the cost of constructing the NWU headquarters opening this year. And most critically in June of 1968 during a six week, NWU-initiated strike of ALPART, approximately \$7200 was provided the strikers through the International Metalworkers' Federation. The BITU also received benefits from its U.S. relationships. The building which now houses the BITU headquarters was paid for through the generosity of the American Electrical Workers.

Then too, there is the presence of the American Institute of Free Labour Development (AIFLD) which has provided travel grants and scholarships to numerous individuals in the Jamaican labour movement. AIFLD also funds a local Labour Institute at the University of the West Indies, Mona. (AIFLD is an acknowledged arm of the U.S. State Department.)

The motive behind all this, however, is not so evident. As one NWU official replied when questioned about the funding of the ALPART strike: "It's all part of a chess game". So in analysing the game, there may be a multiplicity of strategies. First it could be due to a sense of brotherhood: all union movements should stick together against management or other unaffiliated unions. Second, there is the theory that if wages are kept high in the Caribbean, management will be less eager to move plants outside the United States. Thus, there is the chance for fuller employment in the United States. Third, there is the "satellite theory" which presupposes American control of local unions. This would provide the U.S. with political leverage in a country dominated by political unionism. Fourth, there is the more primitive "satellite" theory which suggests that there is some immediate political objective to be gained: in this instance, a U.S. preference for the NWU-PNP as opposed to the BITU-JLP. (There could be some basis for this in terms of U.S. sympathies in Jamaica.) Fifth, there is the desire to keep the local workers contented enough so that radical unionists of the Scott variety do not make much headway. This serves the interests of American Steel Workers since they depend on the aluminium industry to provide jobs for them in the United States. If the flow of raw materials (bauxite) is cut off, the American Aluminium industry would be forced to cut back while finding other sources.

In the end, the reason for U.S. labour's expenditures in the Caribbean could be all or none of these. Whatever, the fact that Americans are spending money indicates that there are returns which are serving their self-interest. One wonders if, in the long run, Jamaican interests are being served as well. Many sections of Jamaican society do not think so. On the other hand, many do. Consequently, it seems not so much a question of "if" but a matter of "when" and "how" a confrontation of interests takes place. For on the left there are the rural poor, the urban unskilled or unemployed and the University intellectuals. On the right there are the large land owners, the financial interests or management in Kingston and foreign capital dominated by bauxite. And in the middle, so far straddling both camps, there are the political parties and their unions.

Consequently, having examined, in part only, the organizations, attitude and policies of the right, center and left (FJM--20,21), a more specific description of the factors contributing to confrontation is necessary. These will be the subject matter of FJM--22.

Yours,

Frank Mc Donald

Frank McDonald.

Photographs courtesy Jamaica Information Service.

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