

Pioneer social worker Amy Bailey is dead

• Teacher, lecturer, educator and human rights activist, big contributor to national development

Noted teacher, social worker, and human rights activist Amy Beckford Bailey, O.J., is dead.

She succumbed at 11am yesterday morning at the age of 95, in the Nuttall Memorial Hospital. She is survived by her sister, Elsie.

Bailey was born in Walderston, Manchester in 1895, to two school teachers in a family of eight children.

She attended Mount Olivet Elementary School after which she enrolled in Shortwood Teachers' College, closely following family tradition. Bailey proved to be a brilliant student but fell ill close to the end of her studies, as hard work took its toll.

While convalescing, she taught herself shorthand and typewriting and was able to replace an older sister as a teacher at Kingston Technical High School, a post she filled with "great distinction" for many years.

While there that she challenged the then Governor of

Jamaica to open posts in the civil service to students of the school, who were mostly black and of modest means. Previously, only secondary school students were allowed to sit the civil service exams. She was successful.

Bailey was the first female



AMY BAILEY

member of the Jamaica Union of Teachers. Not only did she distinguish herself locally, but interna-

tionally as well. She lectured at a Peace Conference in Glasgow and the Oxford Group Conference in Interlaken, Switzerland and the United States in 1951 on Jamaica's Educational and Social History.

Amy Bailey's chief concerns were threefold: equal opportunity for blacks in employment, skills training for black girls and assistance to needy children. She carried her demands for fair employ

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...ment practices up-and-down King Street, badgering employers for better working conditions for black people.

By 1938, Amy organised the first birth control league with the help of Dr. Hyacinth Lightbourne and others. Amy was inspired by the leadership of Marcus Garvey as a black man of dignity.

During the 1938 disturbances, Amy felt deeply moved and identified particularly with the women who took part in the protests. That same year she travelled to London to seek funds for the Jamaica Save the Children Fund.

When the liberal newspaper, Public Opinion, was founded, she contributed articles and letters and was active in the Women's Liberal Club which elected the first woman to a Parish Council.

She never married but "mothered" 6,000 girls in her Housecraft Training Centre established in the forties in addition to an adopted daughter.

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