

SANGSTER, Sir Donald

DONALD SANGSTER GOES TO FINAL SLEEP

22-DAY COMATOSE

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FIGHT FOR LIFE

ENDS IN MONTREAL

Sir Donald Sangster is dead. Jamaica's second Prime Minister, and its first elected since Independence, died at 12.45 p.m. yesterday in the Montreal Neurological Institute, Canada, where his strong constitution had been fighting a losing battle against brain haemorrhage since March 22.

Death came to Donald Burns Sangster, the quiet, unassuming Jamaican who rose to the highest position in the land, just four days after he had been knighted by the Queen and less than two months after he finally became Prime Minister of Jamaica in his own right.

An announcement issued in Montreal — and in Kingston — by the Government of Jamaica told a waiting world that Sir Donald had died. He did not awaken from the coma into which he had lapsed on April 1.

So came to an end the long and gallant struggle which Sir Donald had put up for life, after being stricken at Newcastle, in the hills above Kingston, on March 18. Rushed to Canada two days later, he lay critically ill for 20 days, attended by a team of medical specialists.

For 34 years, the 55-year-old bachelor lawyer served Jamaica. Twenty of those years were served under the leadership of Sir Alexander Bustamante, dominant figure on the Jamaican political scene since 1938. It was faithful, loyal, uncomplaining service.

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For two years, he acted as Prime Minister for the aged and ailing Sir Alexander. It was only in February of this year, at the General Election for the House of Representatives, that he came into his own — becoming Prime Minister in name as well as in fact, as the result of the Jamaica Labour Party's victory at the polls.

That triumph crowned the political career of Donald Sangster, who had served at various times as Deputy Leader of the Jamaica Labour Party, Leader of the House of Representatives, Minister of Social Welfare, Minister of Finance, Minister of External Affairs and Minister of Defence.

Born in October, 1911, the son of a land surveyor, Sir Donald was educated at Munro College. Admitted as a solicitor of the Supreme Court in 1937, he served in various posts, including chairman, on the old St. Elizabeth Parochial Board, prior to his entry in Parliament in 1949 as a member of the Jamaica Labour Party.

Sir Donald lost his St. Elizabeth parliamentary seat in 1955, but re-entered the House later that year when he won a by-election for a vacant seat for a Clarendon constituency.

With this reverse behind him, Sir Donald's political star rose steadily. He became Minister of Finance and Leader of the House in 1953, during the life of the Labour Government of 1949-54. When the party returned to power in 1962, he resumed both offices.

Overseas, he gained prestige in the Commonwealth Association, serving as its chairman in 1964. He also made a name for himself in international financial and economic circles as Jamaica's principal representative and spokesman on the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

As his country's most experienced Minister, with the exception of Sir Alexander, Sir Donald had hoped to guide Jamaica's future as its new Prime Minister. But this was not to be.

Expressions of regret were widespread throughout Jamaica yesterday. The Governor-General, Sir Clifford Campbell, the new Prime Minister, the Hon. Hugh Shearer; the former Acting Prime Minister, the Hon. Clement Tavares; the former Prime Minister, Sir Alexander Bustamante, and the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Norman Manley, led the nation in mourning the passing of Sir Donald.

Messages came in from overseas, deploring his death, Her Majesty the Queen, who made him a Knight Commander of the Royal Victoria Order on April 7, as he lay dying in Montreal, sent her regrets. Condolences came from the Prime Minister of England, the Prime Minister of Canada, the Prime Minister of Barbados, among others.

From King's House to the humblest hamlet, the nation grieved at the loss of one who held such promise as a leader and a statesman. Everyone echoed and endorsed the poignant words of the Governor-General: "This to all of us is an irreparable loss. All that we have to do now is to close our ranks and to continue to work for Jamaica."

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