

# He was Jamaica's man of Foreign Affairs

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DURING the five years in which he played a leading role in the affairs of independent Jamaican Government, Sir Donald Sangster had a good deal more to do with foreign affairs than is generally realized. As Minister of Finance, then as Acting Prime Minister and Minister of External Affairs, he dealt with political and economic leaders and problems in many areas of the world.

He attended several Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conferences both as a member and as a leader of Jamaica's delegation, as a Governor of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund he was constantly in touch with officials of both institutions at home and abroad; as an enthusiastic member and one-time President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association he did much to increase the influence of this body; and he was an active participator in the affairs of the Western Hemisphere.

Sir Donald believed in the Commonwealth. On numerous occasions he expressed the belief that it ought to have a more active part in world affairs. He seemed to have been firmly convinced that Jamaica's economy was such that it need not depend on hand-outs from abroad, and was jealous that Jamaica should strictly adhere to the hard policies of the I.M.F. on the convertibility of currency and that the Jamaican Pound should ever be strong. He believed these would increase confidence abroad in Jamaica's economy. Whether he would have admitted it or not he was a political conservative; he had a deep devotion to good order. He led Jamaica in a conciliatory role at conferences where deep divisions threatened to disturb the status quo. And he was always ready to offer the services of Jamaica to mediate disputes between Commonwealth members.

**London parley**

His first essay into the circle of Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conferences was as a member of the delegation to the London talks in September, 1962, the month after Jamaica became independent and earned its right to attend these conferences. But in July, 1964, he led Jamaica's delegation to the London Conference and spoke before the assembled Commonwealth leaders on race relations. It was then also that he succeeded in convincing the other Prime Ministers of the importance of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, as a result of which the British Government decided to increase its financial contribution to the CPA.

He appeared to have been impressed at that time with the tremendous improvement in the relations between Jamaican migrants to the U.K. and the British people. When in September, 1966, Sir Donald said that Jamaica would commit troops to assist if it was decided to take United Nations military action against the breakaway Rhodesian regime, the offer caused some stir and even ridicule here. But it was not the first time that he had expressed similar feelings. In December, 1965, a short time after Mr. Ian Smith's Unilateral Declaration of Independence, he had stated in the House of Representatives that if Britain did not act swiftly to put down the Smith rebellion, action would become necessary and Jamaica stood ready to assist with men and materials, though it would not go as far as to break off diplomatic relations with the U.K.

At three different Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conferences the dispute over Rhodesia was uppermost: at London in June, 1965; in Lagos, Nigeria, in November, 1965; and again in London, in August, 1966. But Sir Donald's role was often one of peacemaker. Before leaving for London in August, 1966, he said that Jamaica hoped to provide an element of stabilization between any divergent nations at the Prime Ministers' conference. He said that Jamaica, basically, over the last few years, had been progressive and taken a stable rather than sentimental line in all its representations abroad, and in all the conferences at which it had been represented. "It is this way we hope to go at the Prime Ministers' Conference," he said. And this was the tact he succeeded in taking, with some success, at the conference for the feared split in the Commonwealth did not materialize. And it was again in the Commonwealth that he put his trust for the solution of the Rhodesian problem. When Pakistan and India were invading each other's territories in August, 1965, he sent messages to the leaders of the two Commonwealth countries offering his services and those of Jamaica to assist in negotiating a settlement of their dispute. At the end of 1965, in reviewing the year's achievements, he said that Jamaica could justly claim to have made a considerable impact on world affairs.

By THE FOREIGN DESK

He seemed to have entertained a special affection for the CPA. Even when a member of the Opposition, he was quick to call the notice of the C.P.A.'s officials to the need for entertaining visiting Parliamentarians. As Vice Chairman of the C.P.A. in 1963 he went to Kuala Lumpur and took the occasion to express Jamaica's support for Commonwealth Malaysia in its period of confrontation with neighbouring Indonesia.

In November, 1964, as chairman of the C.P.A., he was chief host to the meeting which took place in Jamaica. He seized the occasion proudly to tell the visitors that "the way we live in Jamaica is one of the things we can sell the world."

In Ottawa, at another C.P.A. conference in October, 1966, he told delegates that the Commonwealth had a mission to perform in the world and that member nations should exercise a greater influence in world affairs than they were then doing.

**World Bank member**

Sir Donald led Jamaica's move to become a member of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund the month after independence, in September, 1962. Jamaica was one of the eleven new countries whose application for membership was approved by the Governors of the two financial institutions at the 17th annual meeting. Jamaica's World Bank quota was then fixed at £9½ million. Membership in the two institutions began formally in February, 1963.

He told the officials of the World Bank and the I.M.F. on one occasion: "We realize we are no longer living in isolation or under the sheltered wing of the United Kingdom and that Jamaica will now have to take its place among the world's nations and share its obligations, which we are perfectly happy to do."

He wanted the Jamaican Pound to remain strong. He told Rotarians in Jamaica a few days after independence that the Jamaican £ would stay at parity with the British Pound. Yet in September, 1966, when there were reports that the British Pound was weak and stood in danger of devaluation, Sir Donald took measures to insulate the Jamaican Pound from being devalued. At the same time, however, he assured his questioners in London, that the legislation to free the Jamaican Pound from the obligation to devalue if the British Pound suffered did not mean a cut in Jamaica's Sterling deposits.

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Sir Donald was a hard loan man. When other developing nations did not take the risk of trying to raise a loan on the London market, he succeeded in raising such loans and in having them oversubscribed. It was financially demanding for Jamaica to live up to the I.M.F.'s obligations, but since Jamaica did, raising a loan was never a problem.

These financial dealings frequently took him abroad on business trips. In September, 1964, he paid tribute in Tokyo, Japan, to the manner in which the World Bank and I.M.F. approached the problems of the developing countries and said that their policies were headed in the right direction.

As Finance Minister, Sir Donald was Jamaica's regular representative to the conferences of Commonwealth Finance Ministers. In September, 1965, he was host to such a conference in Jamaica.

## Western Hemisphere

But as Acting Minister of External Affairs, and because Jamaica is geographically a part of the Western Hemisphere, Sir Donald had frequently to deal with regional matters.

He led the Jamaican delegation to the Port of Spain Conference in July, 1962, to discuss the residual Common Services of the lately defunct West Indies Federation. This conference decided upon matters concerning shipping and the University of the West Indies.

He moved the resolution of formal tribute in the House of Representatives on the death of the United States President John F. Kennedy, when he said that Jamaica as a small independent country had lost a great friend.

During the first prolonged illness of Sir Alexander Bustamante, which began in April, 1964, when Sir Donald was appointed Acting Prime Minister, it fell to him to preside over the Conference of Heads of Jamaican Missions overseas. The conference drew up Jamaica's policy on such things as the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference scheduled for later that year, the racial troubles in the then British Guiana, the then threatening trouble in Southern Rhodesia, and Jamaica's relations with the Afro-Asian bloc in the United Nations.

The very next month, in June, 1964, he outlined Jamaica's foreign policy in the House, stressed support for the principles of the United Nations and of the Commonwealth, took a firm stand on colonialism and emphasized the desire for all dependent peoples to get independence as soon as possible. He affirmed Jamaica's belief in the solidarity of the Western Hemisphere.

The following July he spoke in London of Jamaica's willingness to help British Guiana solve its racial problems, and in the months that followed attended a series of talks in the Caribbean and in Canada on the problems which confronted the Western Hemisphere Commonwealth countries.

Yet it has been clear that he was never convinced that Jamaica's interests were necessarily linked with closer political or economic ties with the Commonwealth Caribbean.

About a month ago he said at the regional conference at the U.W.I., Mona, that the extent of regional cooperation between the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean could only be determined by needs; and that the extent of that cooperation would finally be decided on by the people themselves after the needs had been established.

"One thing must remain clear at all times," he said. "People cannot be pushed into regional organization. The theory that suggests that if people come together they will achieve more than they can separately is open to serious criticism and anyway is often rejected by the people."

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