

SANGSTER, Sir Donald

# The life and death of Sir Donald

INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA  
WEST INDIA REFERENCE LIBRARY

✓

**T**HE Government of Jamaica announces with deep regret the death yesterday of the Prime Minister, the Hon. Sir Donald Sangster.

Sir Donald died in the Montreal Neurological Institute, in Canada, where he had been receiving medical attention since Tuesday, March 21, 1967. He was rushed there on a special plane, which was placed at his disposal by the Government of the United States, when his local doctors diagnosed that he was suffering from a sub-arachnoid haemorrhage.

This diagnosis was confirmed by the specialists in the Montreal Neurological Institute.

Sir Donald fell ill while he was in Newcastle, in upper St. Andrew, on Saturday, March 18, 1967, while he was working on the details of the Budget for the financial year, 1967-68. He was examined then by Dr. A. L. McFarlane, and he was taken to his official residence, Vale Royal, for further examination.

## Treatment

On realizing the degree of the Prime Minister's illness, arrangements were immediately made on the following Monday, March 20, for him to be taken to Montreal for specialist examination and treatment. He left Jamaica that night, accompanied by the Minister of Health, Hon. Dr. Herbert Edemire, and Drs. A. L. McFarlane, Ronald Irvine and Roy Levy, Nurse Angelita Leiba, and a personal aide, Mr Andrew Abrahams. The Prime Minister had a satisfactory flight, and his mood on his arrival was good

There was hope for his recovery, but on Thursday, March 23, it was learnt that his condition had deteriorated and the doctors were concerned at the gravity of the situation. Immediately the Government was informed, the Acting Prime Minister, Hon. D. C. Tavares, and the Minister of External Affairs, Hon. Hugh Shearer, left Jamaica for Montreal, to be at Sir Donald's bedside. The Government also arranged for the Prime Minister's

aunt, Mrs. Iris Sangster and her son, Dr. Alfred Sangster, to go to Canada.

Hopes for Sir Donald's recovery were raised again on Easter Sunday, March 26. However, on Saturday, April 1, 1967, his condition started to deteriorate again.

This condition varied, and on Wednesday, April 5, 1967, signs described as "terminal complications" were observed, and all hopes for his recovery were lost. The Prime Minister had been in a coma for several days prior to his death.

Sir Donald was born on October 26, 1911. He was the son of the late W. B. Sangster, Commissioned Land Surveyor of St. Elizabeth, and Mrs. Sangster. He was educated at Munro College in Jamaica (1921-29) and was admitted to practice as a solicitor in Jamaica in 1937.

INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA  
WEST INDIA REFERENCE LIBRARY

Daily Gleaner;

12 April '67;

P.25

Sir Donald was a versatile sportsman in his earlier years, participating actively in cricket, football, athletics and boxing, while he was in college. This interest in sports continued after he left Munro College, and at one time he was captain of the St. Elizabeth Parish team in the Nethersole Cricket Cup competition.

Sir Donald has been actively involved in politics for a longer period than any other Jamaican. He began his political career at the age of twenty-one when he campaigned and won a seat in the St. Elizabeth Parochial Board on June 22, 1933. He became Vice-Chairman of this Parochial Board in 1941, and Chairman in 1949.

In 1944, he made his first bid to enter national politics when as an Independent Candidate he contested the South St. Elizabeth constituency seat, and lost. He joined the Jamaica Labour Party and subsequently won this seat in the General Election of 1949. His political career in national politics suffered a temporary set-back in February 1955, when his party lost the General Election and he himself lost his seat in South St. Elizabeth.

## Success

Later that year he however successfully contested a by-election for the North East Clarendon constituency.

Sir Donald had been a member of the House of Representatives since 1949, and was First Deputy Leader of the Jamaica Labour Party since 1950. He was Leader of the House from 1953 to 1955, and was re-appointed to this post in 1962. In June 1966, Sir Donald relinquished this post. At the time of his death he represented the constituency of North Central Clarendon in Parliament.

He was Minister of Social Welfare from 1950 to 1953 and Minister of Finance from 1953 until 1955 when his party lost the General Elections. In 1962 when the Jamaica Labour Party was returned to office he was appointed Minister of Finance and subsequently Deputy Prime Minister.

## Appointment

He was appointed to act as Prime Minister, Minister of External Affairs and Minister of Defence in January 1965 as a result of the illness of the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Sir Alexander Bustamante, P.C.

While acting Sir Donald retained the post of Minister of Finance. He had previously acted for a short while as Prime Minister in 1964.

Consequent on the victory of the Jamaica Labour Party in the General Election on February 21, 1967, and the resignation of Sir Alexander Bustamante, he was appointed Prime Minister on February 22, 1967, retaining at the time the posts of Minister of Finance and Minister of Defence.

Sir Donald was Jamaica's delegate to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Conferences in New Zealand in 1950, Ceylon in 1952, and Malaysia in 1963, and he was Chairman of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in 1964 and Chairman at its Conference which was held in Jamaica in that year.

## REC

He was Jamaica's representative on the West Indies Regional Economic Committee from 1950 to 1955, and Leader of Jamaica's delegations to the Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council conferences in 1951, 1963, 1964, 1965, and 1966. Jamaica was the host country for this conference in 1955, and Sir Donald presided. He also led Jamaica's delegation to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund Meetings in Washington, U.S.A., in 1963, 1964, 1965, and 1966. He had been a Governor of the World Bank and I.M.F. since 1963.

Sir Donald was a member of Jamaica's delegation to the Heads of Commonwealth Caribbean conferences in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad in 1963 and in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1964, and he led the delegation to these conferences in Georgetown, Guyana (then British Guiana) in 1965, and in Bridgetown, Barbados in 1966. He also led Jamaica's delegation to the Canada-Commonwealth Caribbean Countries conference in Ottawa in July, 1966.

Sir Donald accompanied Sir Alexander Bustamante to the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in London, England in 1962 and he attended this conference as Sir Alexander's representative in 1964. Sir Donald attended as Acting Prime Minister the conferences in London in 1965, in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1966, and in London in 1966.

## Constitution

He was a member of the Joint Committee of Parliament which framed the Constitution for Independent Jamaica, and he was member of the delegation which went to England in 1962 to discuss it with the British Government.

He had been Chairman of the University of the West Indies Grants Committee since 1963.

After his party's success at the 1967 General Election and his appointment as Prime Minister, Sir Donald had just completed forming his Cabinet when he became ill. He died, without ever having the opportunity of presiding over the first meeting of his Cabinet which was held on Monday, March 20, 1967, the day he left Jamaica to enter the Montreal Neurological Institute.

Sir Donald served on a number of public boards and committees during his lifetime. He had been a member of Manning's Home

Advisory Committee and of the East and West St. Elizabeth School boards; he had been a Director of Jamaica Vegetables Ltd., from 1943 to 1949, and he also played a prominent part in the scouting activities of the parish of his birth, St. Elizabeth. He had been a member of the Munro and Dickenson Trust, the Black River Drainage and Irrigation Board and also a member of the Board of Governors of the Institute of Jamaica.

INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA  
WEST INDIA REFERENCE LIBRARY

INSTITUTE OF JAMAICA  
WEST INDIA REFERENCE LIBRARY

Daily Gleaner, 12 Apr. 67