

RT. HON. DR HUGH LAWSON SHEARER

The Most Hon. Dr Hugh Lawson Shearer, Jamaica's third Prime Minister was born in the village of Martha Brae on the border of Trelawny on May 8, 1923. He attended Falmouth Primary School and later won a parish scholarship to St. Simon's College in Kingston. Mr. Shearer graduated from St. Simon's in 1940.

The 1940's were a time of intense agitation for better labour relations in Jamaica and the chief agitator was Sir Alexander Bustamante. In 1940 when Mr. Shearer was deciding on a career path Sir Alexander Bustamante was imprisoned for organizing a strike on the waterfront among the workers of the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (B.I.T.U).

Mr. Shearer who could claim distant kinship to Sir Alexander Bustamante and the Rt. Excellent Norman Manley was interested in becoming a journalist. He was taken on as a trainee journalist on the weekly publication the Jamaican Worker the newspaper of the B.I.T.U and eventually became its editor. While being editor of the paper, Mr. Shearer simultaneously served his apprenticeship as a trade unionist.

In 1947, Mr. Shearer was appointed assistant general secretary of the union and that same year contested and won the central St. Andrew seat of the Council of Kingston and St. Catherine Corporation. *Council*.

In the 1955 general elections, he was elected to the House of Representatives even though the Jamaica Labour Party lost the elections. He sat in the Opposition benches until he lost his seat in the 1959 elections. The J.L.P won the succeeding general elections and Shearer was appointed to the Legislative Council when the Senate replaced the Council. He was made Leader of Government Business and a Minister without portfolio.

4. Razor Blade factory in St. Andrew.
5. Jamaica Frozen Foods, which started packaging frozen meals and vegetables for the local and export market.

The tourist industry also experienced major expansion. A new pier was constructed at Folly in Port Antonio to accommodate increase in arrival of cruise ships.

The space age soon came along with the construction and commissioning of a satellite earth station at Prospect Pen St. Thomas, which immediately improved the quality of international telephone service and radio and television broadcast.

Most visible change though was the activity by the private sector in the construction industry. There was the start of the development of the Portmore Lands in Hellshire area of St. Catherine. By 1971 1,260 houses were constructed in Independence city, 200 units in Edgewater and 422 in Ensom city. Other housing developments took place in other parishes such as Woodland in Mandeville, Manchester.

During his term, free tuition at technical high schools was started as well as free tuition at secondary grammar schools for very poor children. Internationally, he was an articulate opponent of the Apartheid regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia. He was the first Prime Minister to pay official visit to other Caribbean countries and first head of a Jamaican government to pay official visit to a number of African countries such as Ethiopia.

Mr. Shearer proved himself to be a true and dedicated leader of the Trade Union Movement, as a Politician and as a Prime Minister. His belief in hard work epitomized his level of commitment to the Jamaican people and the growth of the country's economy.

His mission to the United Nations General Assembly allowed him to be involved in many international issues. In 1963, Mr. Shearer presented a proposal to the United Nations that 1968 should be designated as Human Rights Year. The U.N General Assembly accepted this proposal. As a result, he became one of the country's most influential personalities both locally and internationally.

Upon the untimely death of Mr. Donald Sangster, Jamaica's second Prime Minister Mr. Shearer was chosen to be the Prime Minister of Jamaica. He was sworn in on April 11, 1967.

HUGH SHEARER AS PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Shearer's term as Prime Minister (1967-1972) is regarded as some of Jamaica's most productive years. His approach to administration was to:

1. Allow the private sector to manage the production sector.
2. Encourage foreign investment.
3. Keep prices low.
4. Continuously expand Jamaica's ownership of assets giving Jamaican workers preference in employment.
5. Guiding the trade union movement to search for a range of benefits for workers especially facilities for training.

For the entire period under his leadership the country's gross domestic product grew annually. This was real growth of five per cent over the five-year period, which to date is the best ever achieved by the Jamaican economy.

Mr. Shearer's administration presided over an increase in the number of factories. Some of the factories included the:

1. Good Year's Motor vehicle tire factory in St. Thomas.
2. Bagasse plant for manufacturing board in Spanish Town.
3. Cement pipe plant at Old Harbor, St. Catherine.

AWARD AND HONOURS

1947- Mr. Shearer was awarded the Colonial Development and Welfare Trade Union Scholarship.

1968- Howard University conferred an honorary Doctor of Laws Degree citing him as “a respected leader both within and beyond his own country.”

1990- Mr. Shearer was awarded the Order of Jamaica the Nations fourth highest honor for his distinguished contribution to the Trade Union Movement for half a century.

1994- The University of the West Indies conferred the Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree on Mr. Shearer.

HUGH SHEARER

MAY 18, 1923: Born in Martha Brae, Trewlany

1931-1940: Attended Falmouth Primary

1936-1940: Attended St. Simon's College

1941-46: Journalist at the Jamaican Worker newspaper

1953: Island supervisor B.I.T.U

1955-59: Member of the House of Representatives

1960: Vice president of B.I.T.U