

Pastor, educator retires at 90

UP THERE, in the cool, banana-green, rain-blessed St. Mary Hills of Islington, Rev. Henry Ward, ninetyish, ("I was born about 89 years ago") has just about completed his first year of retirement from ministry in the United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman. But his retirement does not mean rest even though he is recuperating from a 1967 stroke which precipitated his resignation. Continuing to live in Islington, the area in which he has spent the last four and a half decades, Rev. Ward has plans to do a number of articles for publication, and he has actually started on one of these.

A native of the garden parish St. Ann, he went to Mico College as a government exhibitor in 1899. He then taught as a schoolmaster at Ebenezer, Manchester for nine years after which he entered the ministry of the Presbyterian Church.

His nine years as a knight of the chalk and duster, however, did not go unnoticed. An inspector of schools said then that Mr. Ward's school was the best he had ever examined and in his opinion, the best in Jamaica. Three attractive offers came his way: a post at Mico College, a school inspectorate, and the headship of a secondary school but he turned his back on all of them and entered the Woodlands Theological College where he spent his first year as President of the Jamaica Union of Teachers, having been President-elect from the year before.

He was ordained in 1915 when he answered a call to go to Africa as head of the Training College Department for teachers in the Hope Waddell Institution, Calabar. There he served for six years and trained 300 teachers.

Mr. Ward has never been far from the soil and when he started a church at Ishi, he taught not only religion but also agriculture when the men came for classes on Saturday mornings.

With characteristic modesty Mr. Ward pointed out that this mixture of agriculture and religion was not original. "Aggrey did the same thing," he told the *Gleaner* referring to the work of the British missionary.

He returned to Jamaica in 1923 and settled at Islington, St. Mary. He was struck by the poverty of the people who got one shilling per day when they got work. They had no land, they had nothing.

Although he was not an active politician, Rev. Ward was deeply interested in politics, and he campaigned for the election of Mr. Roy Lindo. His efforts paid off. Six months after Mr. Lindo was elected Member of the Legislative Council, Nutfield property was bought and by the medium of a land settlement, the people got 1,400 acres of land. The settlement flourished. Mr. Ward said, and soon Friendship and Rosend properties were bought and became land settlements too.

There were other problems. Salem, Islington was a weak charge. The effective congregation numbered about 30. There was no Sunday School and the church building was broken everywhere. The district, Islington, was said to be the problem place of the Parochial Board.

Craft centre

The teacher in Rev. Ward came to the rescue. He offered his services as headmaster to the Education Department until a suitable teacher could be found.

Next he addressed himself to the task of building a church. In eight years, his dream became a reality in a beautiful monument to dedication and purpose, an edifice that made some people comment that Islington could no longer be a forgotten place.

Mr. Ward would not allow it to be forgotten. He pioneered Basic Schools and Play Centres in Islington. He established a tomato co-op which thrived for a few years and then succumbed to a withering blight. As he put it, the co-op died but the industry continued.

His energies at once sought another way of self-expression and he started a Craft Centre for young women and then set up a Credit Union. Islington was very much on the map.

Today, it is still very much a rural place, but it has electricity although Mr. Ward's home, complete with all the electrical outlets and fittings, has not yet been served.

Despite his many memories and achievements, Mr. Ward showed a gentle reluctance to talk about himself. Once he bent his mind to it, however, the memories of the years came powerfully back, flooding out all reluctance in vivid language clearly articulated.

The possessor of a keen, clear mind, Mr. Ward is also remembered for his contribution to the former Board of Education and to the Ministry of Education. Among his proposals were staggered school hours and the teaching of sex education in a general way to primary schoolchildren. He is still chairman of the Meadowbrook school board.

Mr. Ward married for a second time in 1961. The first Mrs. Ward, a Jamaican whom he married in Africa, died in 1955.

Rev. Ward was twice called to be Moderator of the Presbyterian Church and when that denomination joined with the Congregational Church to form the United Church of Jamaica and Grand Cayman, he it was who was chosen as the first Moderator.

A quotation from the minutes of the third annual Synod of the United Church, which paid tribute to the Rev. Mr. Ward seems apt: "Many people feel that his finest hours came towards the end of his ministry, when with accumulated wisdom and experience of the years he pioneered the establishment of three important landmarks in our Church's life and history. One was the establishment of a Church Extension cause which became Webster Memorial Church, another was the establishment of the Cayman High School and latest of them all, the establishment of Meadowbrook High School. In these memorials the life and service of Mr. Ward will be permanently enshrined in our midst."