



CFNI tribute to Dr. Williams

The following note on Dr. Cicely Williams, of Jamaica who was awarded the Order of Merit in the 1975 Jamaican Honours List had been issued by the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute:

Dr. Cicely Williams, a Jamaican, was recently awarded the Order of Merit in recognition of her distinguished work in the area of Maternal and Child Health and Infant Nutrition.

Her brilliant career spans

seven decades, five continents and 70 countries, notably Ghana where in 1931-30 she was responsible for the identification and description of the disease "kwashiorkor" — the protein deficiency which affects millions of babies at the weaning stage, chiefly in the world's poorest and most under-developed areas.

Her classic observation on this illness have laid the foundations for extensive research on nutritional diseases of childhood and for all child nutrition programmes throughout the world.

Dr. Williams at 82 is still Professor and Consultant in International Family Health at the Tulane University School of Public Health and visiting Professor in the Department of Pediatrics of the University of Maryland School of Medicine. In December 1973 and 1974 she lectured to students in the Diploma in Community Nutrition Course and in the Department of Social and Preventive Medicine of the UWI, and she also gave a public lecture on kwashiorkor.

Despite heavy international commitments, she has visited the island many times to see surviving members of her family in Bethel Town, Westmoreland, and from 1950-53 pursued research on Vomiting Sickness in Jamaica which led to several important findings on the subject.

In 1968 she was awarded the Honourary DSc from the UWI, among her many awards and honours, which include the James Spence Memorial Gold Medal from the British Paediatric Association (1965); the Joseph Goldberger Award from the American Medical Association (1967) and the Companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George (1968)

The Order of Merit of Jamaica is limited to 15 living members, and since its institution has been awarded so far to only three. It is reserved for Jamaican citizens who have received eminent distinction in the sciences, arts, literature or other fields of learning. It is especially fitting that the tribute should be presented in international Women's Year to one who overcame the strong prejudices against her sex in medicine to become one of the most remarkable doctors of our age.