MINISTRY PAPER NO. 20

NATIONAL EMBLEMS

The preparations for Jamaica's independence demand that many issues of varying degrees of importance within their particular national context have all to be considered and agreement reached as to what might be finally acceptable to the nation at large. Among these are such matters as the choice of a national flag and anthem as well as a number of other emblems which the whole country and the world in general would over the years that lie ahead come to respect or to identify as representative of the many facets of Jamaican political, cultural and economic life, and grow to accept as the means whereby our varied personality is projected on the international stage in which we are soon to play a role of our own creation.

2. Members of this Honourable House will therefore recall that on the 30th September last, Government decided to hold competitions for a National Anthem and a National Flag for an independent Jamaica. It was decided that an award of £100 would be paid for the best entry for the words of the Anthem and a similar compensation for the music. A further £100 would also be paid for the accepted design for a National Flag.

3. Since then, hundreds of entries have been received for both competitions.

4. Accordingly, a committee was named to settle adjudication procedures and to recommend the best designs and compositions to Government who, in collaboration with a Joint Committee of the Legislature, would seek to reach agreement on the final form of these matters.


(a) AGREED that the closing date for the National Flag Competition should be fixed as March 10th, 1962;
(b) ACCEPTED the decision of Government that a short list of 12 designs should be prepared for presentation to the Joint Committee of the Parliament, and

(c) RECOGNISED that the Joint Committee would be largely responsible for the choice of a suitable design.

6. An examination of approximately 360 entries for a National Flag was conducted and an agreed short list was forwarded to the Joint Committee of the Legislature, through the Chairman of the Independence Celebrations Committee, for final adjudication. However no decision has yet been reached in connection with this matter.

7. With reference to plans for a National Anthem, it has already been announced that the Competition for the words will be judged in the first instance. The successful script would then be published forthwith and a contest for the music put in train. Since the initial announcement in September last, nearly 100 entries for the words have been received and it was subsequently announced on the 17th of March that the competition for the words of the National Anthem would close on Saturday 31st March, 1962. This decision in no way precludes persons from sending in words and music as a dual entry, and indeed the competition for the music will still remain open after the closing date for the words so that selected verses may be set to music by anyone desirous of doing so.

8. At the same time the Ministry of Education has been engaged in preparing, with the help of a committee set up by the Ministry of Education, a National Prayer, a National Pledge and a National Song for use in all schools and similar institutions throughout the Island.

9. Details of a scheme for arriving at what might be generally acceptable as a National March have also to be formulated in due course.

/10. ...
10. In giving consideration to what might be the final form of an appropriate Coat of Arms for an independent Jamaica, both Government and the Opposition have reached agreement in principle that the existing Arms, granted Jamaica since 1661 under Royal Warrant and partially revised in 1957, constitutes a badge of great historical significance to the nation and should be retained. The original Arms were designed by William Sandcroft, who was at that time Archbishop of Canterbury and the use of the Royal Helmet and Royal Mantling is a unique distinction accorded Jamaica. It has been AGREED, however, that there is a need to revise the present motto which is now deemed out of context with the country’s new status. Accordingly, consideration is now being given to devising a suitable motto in English to replace the existing Latin version.

11. Simultaneous with these arrangements, the Ministry of Agriculture and Lands, in collaboration with the Jamaica Horticultural Society, had been giving active consideration to the feasibility of selecting a representative National Flower.

12. With the approval of the Cabinet a Select Committee, consisting of the President of the Jamaica Horticultural Society, Mr. G.H. Scott, O.B.E., Mrs. Edna Manley, Mr. Bernard Lewis, O.B.E., Director of the Institute of Jamaica, Mr. G.R. Proctor, Botanist at the Science Museum and Mr. V.R. James, Superintendent of Public Gardens, was constituted for the purpose.

13. A short list of 14 local flowers had previously been selected by various horticultural societies throughout the island, were carefully examined, given the widest informed circulation to ascertain public opinion and exhibited at a recent Flower Show organised by the Jamaica Horticultural Society. On the basis of this relatively extensive canvass the Society was able to recommend to the National Flower Committee for approval the LIGNUM VITAE flower as the national flora emblematic of Jamaica.
14. With the establishment of the Independence Celebrations Committee, the National Flower Committee was requested to submit a report as quickly as possible on this matter together with their proposals for a National Tree, Fruit and Bird. To cope with the wider terms of reference now accorded it, the Committee co-opted Mr. J.N. Burra, Conservator of Forests and Miss D. Powell.

15. The recommendation of the Jamaica Horticultural Society that the LIGNUM VITAE flower should be the floral emblem of Jamaica was adopted by the select Committee after due consideration, and it went on to suggest that the National Tree should be the BLUE MAHOE, the National Fruit the ACKEE, and the National Bird the DOCTOR BIRD or Swallow-tail Humming Bird. The accompanying ANNEX gives some historical background and some relevant facts on the four emblems thus selected.

16. This paper is laid for the information of Honourable Members of the House. It is necessary to do so in order to ensure the widest possible circulation among our people and that all may be aware of the progress being made towards a final settlement of these important matters.

N.W. MANLEY
Premier and Minister of Development

O.P. 311/01
ANNEX

NATIONAL FLOWER

LIGNUM VITAE (Guaiacum officinale) is indigenous to Jamaica and was found here by Christopher Columbus. It is thought that the name "Wood of Life" was then adopted because of its medicinal qualities. The tree flourishes in the dry woodlands along both the North and South coasts of the island, in addition to shedding a delicately attractive blue flower, the plant itself is extremely ornamental. The wood is used for propeller shaft bearings in nearly all the ships sailing the Seven Seas, and because of this, in shipyards, etc. the Lignum Vitae and Jamaica are closely associated. The wood is also used in the manufacture of curios, sought after by visitors and nationals alike. There is also a thriving export trade.

NATIONAL TREE

MAHOE (Hibiscus elatus). This is a lovely and outstanding tree, easily propagated and for over a century has been regarded as one of our primary economic timbers. It is currently much used for re-afforestation and is a valuable source of cabinet timber. Of an attractive blue-green colour with variegated yellow intrusions it is capable of taking a high polish showing to advantage the variety of grain and colour tones. The Trade, local and foreign, consumes annually many thousands of feet of this beautiful timber. The Conservator of Forests has given an assurance that there will be large numbers available for tree planting at the forthcoming Independence Celebrations, and it is also considered suitable for introduction into gardens both in the plains and on higher ground.

NATIONAL FRUIT

ACKEE (Blighia sapida). This fruit selected itself and whilst not indigenous to Jamaica, has remarkable historic associations. It was originally imported from West Africa, probably brought here in a slave ship, and now grows luxuriously producing each year large quantities of edible fruit.

The tree was unknown to science until plants were taken from Jamaica to England in 1793 by none other than Capt. William Bligh of "Mutiny ..."
"Mutiny on the Bounty" fame, hence the botanical name "Eliisia sapida" in honour of the notorious Sea-Captain. One of the earliest local propagators of the tree was Dr. Thomas Clarke who introduced it to the Eastern parishes in 1773.

Jamaica is the only place where the fruit is generally recognised as an edible crop, although the plant has been introduced into most of the other Caribbean islands (Trinidad, Grenada, Antigua, Barbados), Central America and even Florida where it is known by different names and does not thrive in economic quantities. The tree produces a rich, savoury fruit, consisting of an outer pod of vivid scarlet which opens in a petal-like fashion when mature, displaying two or three bright cream-coloured arils topped by a shiny black seed. The arils are the edible portion which is now the basis of a thriving canning industry, supplying Jamaican emigrants to the U.K., Canada, the United States and Panama.

NATIONAL BIRD

DOCTOR BIRD (*Trochilus polytmus*). The "Doctor Bird" or wallow-tail Humming Bird lives only in Jamaica and is one of the most outstanding of the 320 species of Humming Birds. It is well to note that the beautiful feathers of these birds have no counterpart in the entire bird world population and produce iridescent colours characteristic only of that family. The Doctor Bird has been immortalised for many decades in Jamaica folk lore and song.