

B/N - Glasspole, F. A. and H. W.  
*Highlights of a distinguished and dedicated career*

# Over the years with

# Jamaica's new Governor-General

June 1, 1973

Florizel Augustus Glasspole, son of the late Methodist minister, Rev. Theophilus Glasspole and his wife Florence, was born in Kingston on September 25, 1909.

Between 1914-1918, the years of World War I, he attended Buff Bay's Primary (then called Elementary) School. In 1919 to 1922 he attended Central Branch under Principals Mr Alexander Chambers and Mr Fred Myers. He entered one of the elite schools of Jamaica, Wolmer's High for boys in 1922. In four years, he passed his Junior and Senior Cambridge Examinations.

## Civil Service

Then he joined the Government Service first at the Registration of Titles Office, and next, the General Post Office.

With an insatiable appetite for knowledge and hard work, he studied Accountancy with the late then well-known Auditor, Mr R. A. Parkinson, and passed the London Junior and Senior CC Examinations.

He pursued by correspondence, further courses in Accountancy with the Scottish School of Accountancy. On completion, he wanted to pursue Law courses, but to his great dismay, his parents could not afford it.

It was during this period that he was closely associated with the Coke Church as a member, and as Secretary of the Coke Young Men's Club, and Secretary of the Guild. Then, he worked with such distinguished Clergymen as the Rev Armon-Jones, now deceased, and the Rev J. J. Whitfield and Easton, now in England.

## Debater

Young Glasspole represented the Coke Club in many debating contests of the Kingston & St. Andrew Debating and Literary Society which was founded by the late Phillip Blake, and included such personalities as Councillor Ken Hill (who later became Mayor of the Corporate Area); and Mr David Hardy.

When the Jamaica Reform Association came along in those days which were short of privileges for the masses, Glasspole did not fail to rally to its ranks. The Association was led by many men of calibre, among them the present High Court Judge and President of the Court of Appeal, Sir Cyril Henriques; the late former Minister of Finance, Mr Nethersole and Councillor Ken Hill.

In 1930, Glasspole went to Serge Island Sugar Estates, near Seaforth in St. Thomas, and worked as an Accounting Clerk.

There, his heart shuddered with sympathy for the cane-field workers. In those days it was not uncommon for a worker to earn as little as ten shillings per week. This sad situation moved him, toward trade unionism.

## Clerks' Union

He returned to Kingston that same year. With the late barrister-at-law Hon. E. E. A. Campbell (known as "the fighting barrister"), also a former member of the Legislature, and the late Mr Ernest A. Rae, (a former Mayor of Kingston), Florizel Augustus Glasspole formed the Clerks' Union, which soon won the 45-hour work week for shop assistants throughout Jamaica, and delivered them from some of

the backwash of slavery in those days. To be assured it was steered correctly, he became its general secretary.

He took on engagements in the commission agency business in 1940, serving with Hercules Agency, a largely Pharmaceutical concern, in which he continued with his other occupations until year-end 1943, he decided to do fulltime union work.

He had had to make such a decision, because while at Hercules he organised the Water Commission Manual Workers' Association in 1940, and became its general secretary. In addition, he led the organizing of the Mental Hospital Workers' Union between 1940 and '45 and was its President.

Then came a spate of other workers' organisations. These included: the Municipal and Parochial Workers' Union; the Jamaica Printers and Allied Workers' Union; the Hospitals and Allied Workers' Union, and the Machado Employees' Union. Of all these, he was President.

## Scholarship

When the labour disturbances erupted in Jamaica in 1938, and the British Government sent a Royal Commission (Moyne Commission) here to investigate, Sir Walter Citrine, then General Secretary of the powerful Trade Union Congress of Britain, thought the youngster, Glasspole, so outstanding, he was awarded a scholarship in 1939. But because of the outbreak of World War II, Mr Glasspole was not able to proceed to the United Kingdom, until September, 1946 when he entered Ruskin College at Oxford.

While in Britain, he was afforded the opportunity for further studies by touring the trade union offices, the various administrative offices of the British Labour Party, and learnt a great deal about their operations.

He spent several hours attending debates in the House of Commons, where he observed Parliamentary Practices and Procedures, hobnobbed at British Labour Party and TUC conferences with their leaders and returned with a wealth of knowledge to Jamaica and gave his experience to his country.

It was at this stage that he recommended that all the affiliates of the Jamaica TUC should merge into the Jamaica Trades Union Congress, which was patterned after the British Transport and General Workers' Union.

## 1944 elections

Came Universal Adult Suffrage and the first General Election in 1944 under Jamaica's New Constitution; came also the ladder to Parliamentary ascension: with a string of union ties around his hands and as workers' representative on several boards, (such as the Middle-class Unemployment Com-

mittee of 1942, the Minimum Wage Boards for banking, printing and drygoods trades, member of the Wages Board 1942, the Apprenticeship Committee 1942 and eyed for others which were to come — F. A. Glasspole was selected as the PNP candidate to contest the seat in Parliament for Eastern Kingston, which includes Pt. Royal.

He triumphed by 1,000 votes over three other candidates — Dr G. E. Valentine, Barrister-at-Law Campbell and Mr. Vivian Durham.

It is of interest to note that the PNP then won only four seats in the House of Representatives and East Kingston which he held was one of these. Then F. L. B. Evans joined the PNP and the opposition members became five in the House. Glasspole was elected the first secretary of the PNP Parliamentary Group in January 1945, and has been re-elected unopposed to that post ever since.

## Parliamentary

One of the five Opposition MHRs 1944-49, Glasspole, an incisive skilled and piercing debater, established himself as one of the foremost if not toughest Parliamentarians ever since. A firm believer in preparing his work he never went into any debate without firstclass preparation.

Between 1944 and 1955 he was an ex-officio member of the Kingston & St. Andrew Corporation Council. As Chairman of the Roads and Works Committee for a number of years with the late William McKenzie Seivright as Mayor he was responsible for many road and drainage improvements.

Burdened he was with a great deal of trade union and official business, but Glasspole held the reins as general secretary of the TUC until 1952 when what was commonly known as "The Split" but what was really "a clash of ideologies among the PNP Activists" took place with the resultant inception of the National Workers' Union, (the first two words bearing the initials of the then PNP leader.

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Norman Washington Manley). Glasspole once again held its tender reins as general secretary. He resigned in 1955 — at the dawn of a new day for the PNP and Jamaica — when Manley's party won the general election and Glasspole became Minister of Labour in January of that year. He then resigned from the post of union secretary.

### House Leader

When the PNP won in 1955, the young parliamentarian became, also, Leader of Government Business in the House — an office which he held with distinction until the process of democracy once again turned, and the PNP lost the election to the Jamaica Labour Party in 1962. By virtue of his Office as Leader of the House, Mr Glasspole also automatically became Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association.

He has never lost an election, though his party lost, in the years since his first triumph in 1944. With election held in each succeeding five-year period, Glasspole won 1955, 1959, 1962, 1967, 1972. In one of these elections, one of the JLP's "political fire-brand" the late Hon Clement Tavares, former Minister of Housing, offered a challenge for the Eastern Kingston seat and was trounced.

He can look back with pride on the successful efforts he exerted to save the then "dying" Jamaican Farmwork Programme in the United States where on a tour as Minister of Labour in 1955-57, he lectured recruits, held meetings with farmers' representatives, and U.S. Government officials, to revive this most important invisible export arm of Jamaica's economy. He addressed both Houses of the State of Connecticut and won over the support of George Meaney, President of the AFL-CIO for the programme.

Then again, his knowledge and grit of experience in the field of Education, has been the Sheet-anchor for his country's educational development.

### Labour disputes

His latest policy programme, "The Education Thrust of the '70s" presented to Parliament on May 17 could be cited as his last major Ministerial act of immense impact.

Bold new features too many to mention here, are incorporated in this document of new Education Thrust, which Ministry officials have rated as the result of his distinctive leadership and drive, and a feature of inspiration which he gave the Ministry during this period.

### Education

When the late Norman Manley invited him to be Minister of Education in 1957 he was at first hesitant to accept but eventually agreed. In between 1957-62 he pursued a dynamic role which expanded Secondary High schools accommodation, increased the number of Technical High Schools from one to six and made the free place for High schools a tremendous success.

Blazing a trail in Education, 1957-62, he left distinctive marks on the system.

Came 10 more years of his political career which drifted sideways as he laboured over that period in the Parliamentary Opposition, yet preparing himself for another PNP take-over.

Yet those years afforded him the opportunity of simple ease and the broadening of vision. For in 1962, he visited Nigeria, as one of Jamaica's delegates to the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association conference in Lagos.

Back home and in Parliament, he led the way in preparing the Standing Orders which became effective in 1965.

### Back to Ministry

As though bearing a badge of incomplete mission, he was restored to the office of Minister of Education in 1972 when, once again, the leader of his party and head of Government, the Prime Minister (this time, Hon Michael Manley), asked him to resume such Ministerial responsibilities.

The 14 latest months' term of this veteran as Minister — March, 1972-May, 1973 — has been widely regarded as one of success.

Outstanding here, was the fulfilment of his party's programme in giving for the first time in the history of the country, 18-year-olds the right to vote. And in this respect, the electoral machinery was also rid of many irritations of the voter registration system.

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HON. FLORIZEL GLASSPOLE

Known as the career love of his public duties, Education will not now or again have him exclusively. But few if any, at all, will ever doubt that indelibly he has left his mark on its pages of local history.

Now onward, he goes to King's House as Governor-General. There to give of his talent, energy and experience to a high and distinguished office which is known for its capacity of uses for good, and serving as the springboard for the

creation of greater unity among the people of Jamaica.

Nor were the tributes to him invited and forthcoming from his political party colleagues alone. Out of an upbringing that ingrained a sterling character and forthrightness, Glasspole has earned the admiration and commendation of personalities in both political camps.

### Opposition tribute

And in proof whereof, it is fitting to quote the Opposition Member for Central St. Thomas, Dr Adrian A. Bonner, in an address at the official opening of Seaforth Junior Secondary School, St. Thomas, on October 11, 1972: "On my election to Parliament in the 1960's I tried to find the man Glasspole whom I wished to emulate. I can tell you, Florizel A. Glasspole is a man of immense integrity, discipline and moral. And I needlessly tell you that in Parliament, I have patterned him."

### Honours

That like other honours that followed, he accepted with humility. The decoration of the Commander of the Order of Distinction from his native land, and the Venezuelan Order of Andres Bello, conferred upon him by the President of that country to which he was officially invited in January, this year, have done nothing to build walls of false pride around or made him less approachable.

It is by this and hard work that he has won the love and respect, not alone of his constituents and others in Eastern Kingston and Pt. Royal, but of the whole country.

He is well equipped for his new office.

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