

Tribute paid to N. W. Manley

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The University of the West Indies paid tribute on Saturday night to National Hero, the late Rt. Excellent Norman Manley, in a citation which should have accompanied an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws.

The citation said Mr. Manley when he became Chief Minister in 1955 was as "fearless and persuasive an advocate for his country as he had been in the courts of law. His appeal was to reason, to the courts of men's minds, and in Britain he was respected for an integrity which sought to establish in Jamaica the democratic freedoms and processes integral to the British tradition."

It went on: "Respected, honoured, Norman Manley remained a watchdog for what he believed right, in the Parliament of Jamaica, and as president of the party he founded, until, of his own free will, and to make way for others, he retired in 1969."

The citation, which was read during the graduation exercise by the Public Orator, Professor David Hoyte of the Faculty of Medicine, reads:

"Madam Chancellor, it is meet that this University, come of age in this year of Our Lord, nineteen hundred and seventy, should pay tribute to the late, the Right Excellent Norman Washington Manley, Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Civil Laws of Oxford University, Doctor of Laws, bonoris causa, of Howard University, Queen's Counsel, Military Medal, National Hero of Jamaica. It is meet for Madam, it had been your intention to honour him this night by admitting him to our academic fellowship, to grant

him—as a mark of esteem, or as our Latinists have it, bonoris causa—the degree of Doctor of Laws.

Alas, that was not to be, for he is gone from us—Gone! and the good tears start, the praises that come too slow—gone, but his achievements remain, monuments in the memories of his people, glorious leaves in the more than three hundred years of our history.

"How proud was Norman Manley of our University, how knowledgeable of its struggles and its achievements, how sympathetic to its aspirations, how truly cognisant of its value to our island communities. From its very beginnings—day, before—he encouraged and supported it

in every way in his power, and remained a constant supporter and understanding advocate even in its deepest trials.

"He saw in the education of his people their only hope of breaking with their past, and in the University of the West Indies the culmination of the educational ladder. Ever a practical man, he spread the ideas of, and showed the need for, a University through the length and breadth of Jamaica, emphasising its relative cheapness as an inescapable commitment, its role in preventing the loss of our nationals abroad, its contribution to local expertise and research.

"How proud would he have been to see the birth of our new Faculty of Law, for to him as to Edmund Burke it was the study of Law which 'renders men acute, inquisitive, dexterous, prompt in attack, ready in defence, full of resources... (who) augur misgovernment at a distance, and snuff the approach of tyranny in every tainted breeze.

"It has so often been reiterated that 1938 was the year of destiny in Jamaica—as indeed it was—that we have become mesmerised by those figures, 1938. Yet Norman Manley was alive to the feeling of the times and to the hopes for the future even before that year. Here is what he had to say in 1937—I repeat, in 1937—in a debate whose topic was 'Resolved that the education provided in the secondary schools of Jamaica does not pay due regard to the cultural needs and social structure of the Island'—'We are now at the very turning point of the possibility of realising our existence as a true community, and the crying need is to produce persons who are alive to the fact that we are at a crisis, alive to the challenge that Jamaica should be recognized as a unit with a responsible destiny.... It is idle to talk about political constitutions and political reforms. These things will inevitably come when we have social unity; and that will only come when our secondary schools have produced a sufficient number of persons to make an organic whole of the country'.

His greatness

"Others have sung of his accomplishments, of his greatness, and in better words than I. Of his relatively humble origins, all know. The Manleys and the Shearers were well known families in the West of Jamaica, and just as his father, Thomas Albert Samuel Manley, united the two families by marrying Margaret Ann, daughter of Alexander Shearer, so Norman was to repeat the pattern a generation later by marrying Edna Swithenbank, his cousin, grandchild too to the same Alexander Shearer.

"Looking back, we see the young Manley, the boy in the first decade of this century, growing up in St. Catherine, learning the ways of a small farmer; riding horse to school at Beckford and Smith's; now St. Jago School in Spanish Town. Ever a lover of speed, he was once had up for riding furiously! (a love he retained all his life, for he was often said, later, to be the fastest driver in all Jamaica. Once he defended himself successfully in Court for speeding, then got into his car and drove away at 80 miles an hour!

"But I digress. In 1907 he went on to Jamaica College, which is still proud to record

him as one of its most distinguished of a line of eminent Old Boys (and even may remember that he climbed to the top of the school tower and gave from there a recitation in Latin).

"Here his love of speed was manifested on his own feet, when in 1912 he won seven events at the Secondary Schools Championship at Sabina Park, setting a record of 10 seconds in the 100-yard dash which stood for 41 years.

"He won the Rhodes Scholarship, and there could have been no better winner than the young Norman Manley, an all-rounder in every sense of the word, distinguished in his studies, an outstanding athlete, knowledgeable in country lore and competent in farming. The World War, however, intervened before he could take up the scholarship, and it was typical of his growing sense of service that he enlisted in the Army. He served in the Royal Field Artillery as a gunner, saw action in France and Belgium, survived the Somme, and Passchendaele and—as the soldiers said it—Ypres.

Refusal

"He was saddened by the death of his brother in battle, and, though gaining the Military Medal, he refused a commission, preferring to share the burdens and the camaraderie of the ranks. He saw no glory in war, realizing only too well its stupendous waste.

"What passing-bells for those who die as cattle?

Only the monstrous anger of the guns.

Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle

Can patter out their hasty orisons.

No mockeries for them from prayers or bells

Nor any voice of mourning save the chairs. —

The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;

And bugles calling for them sad shires.'

"His days in Oxford were to sow the seeds of his future greatness, his chosen field the law, his future practice the law, his weapons to bend the colonial hegemony the law. Qualifying with First Class Honours, he was called to the Bar in 1921, and to the Jamaican Bar in 1922; became King's Counsel in 1931, and practised as a barrister until 1954.

"He was Jamaica's most brilliant barrister, and known moreover, and respected, throughout the Commonwealth. In law he saw the answer to his people's wrongs, in law their best hopes for the future. Of his social consciousness in education we have already spoken, and the same compassion for his fellow countrymen led him to the formation of Jamaica Welfare Limited in 1937.

"The march of events, culminating in the riots of 1938, pressed him inexorably into the service of his nation. The die was cast, there was no longer room for doubt as to his proper sphere....

"What matter though I doubt at every pore,

Head-doubts, heart-doubts, doubts at my fingers' ends,

Doubts in the trivial work of every day.

Doubts at the very base of my soul

In the grand moments when she probes herself—

If finally I have a life to show,

The thing I did, brought out in evidence.... and the thing he did is there for all to see.

"Manley was conscious, as only the great and intellectual can be, of the magnitude of his choice, of his commitment. There was no turning back from the challenge to authority, embodied in the formation of the Trades Union Council and of the People's National Party in 1938, in the jailing of his cousin Alexander Bustamante and of members of the People's National Party. Typical of Manley, however, was that his challenge was through the Courts — the freedoms enshrined in the law must be open to all men, irrespective of race or overlordship.

Cherished dream

"And so, gradually but surely, the fabric of political independence was woven — universal adult suffrage, Manley's cherished dream; the two-party system, national elections; a new constitution in 1943. Though he laid the basis for these advances, Manley himself was not to lead his country until 1955, when he became Chief Minister.

"In this office, he was as fearless and persuasive an advocate for his country as he had been in the courts of law. His appeal was to reason, to the courts of men's minds, and in Britain he was respected for an integrity which sought to establish in Jamaica the democratic freedoms and processes integral to the British tradition.

"He led Jamaica into full internal self-government in 1959, but was again to taste defeat at the hands of his charismatic cousin, Bustamante, in the election of 1962, after the collapse of the Federation of the West Indies. So it was that Sir William Alexander Bustamante finally led Jamaica into independence on August 6th, 1962.

"Manley himself was too great a statesman to indulge in useless recrimination, either after the negative vote in the referendum upon Federation or after losing the election. Like Sir Winston Churchill, when after victory in war came defeat in the election of 1945, asked to comment on the people's ingratitude, so Manley would also have said "Ingratitude? Oh, no, I wouldn't call it that. They have had a very hard time."

"Respected, honoured, Norman Manley remained a watchdog for what he believed right, in the Parliament of Jamaica, and as president of the party he founded, until, of his own free will, and to make way for others, he retired in 1969.

"And though custom has changed, Madam, may your orator briefly revert to the habit of his predecessors, and quote from the original Virgil.... "Primo avulso non deficit alter aureus, et simili frondescit virga metallo"—"When a bough is torn away, another gold one grows in its place with leaves of the same metal."

A great leader is gone, and....

We that have loved him so, followed him, honoured him,

Lived in his mild and magnificent eye,

Learned his great language, caught his clear accents,

Made him our pattern to live and to die.'

...we of the University record and honour his achievements,

preserve for all time his works in our archives, pay all homage and respect to the late, our well-beloved, the Right Excellent Norman Washington Manley."

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