

# Manley and the New

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## Jamaica A reply by Rex Nettleford

GLM's long review of *MANLEY AND THE NEW JAMAICA*, which appeared in last Sunday's *GLEANER* said more about a certain genre of book reviewing than it did about the book itself.

Irrelevancies and a certain mean-spirited attitude towards the subject of the work indicate that though the volume has been read through it has not been read thoroughly.

The reviewer was kind enough to concede that the "student of West Indian affairs will be enriched by the publication both of the introduction of Mr. Nettleford and the techie-brief autobiography of Mr. Manley."

Further reading of the review must, however, cause the reader to wonder how much enrichment could possibly take place in the light of the many acts of omission cited by GLM.

A closer reading of the final section of the main introduction (pp. lxxxii-xciv) could have avoided some of the question-begging by GLM with regard to the editor's intentions and the nature of the volume. One can only hope that future discussions on the effort will be more enlightening and may GLM go back and re-read the book and all the introductions (there is one main one and three others).

In so doing the point of the period may present itself clearer to the reviewer who may be further persuaded to rid himself of the all too persistent desire for a 1933 saga of heroes and villains. It is such a perspective that has led to the recurrent distortions and perversities in the review and on these I will now focus.

### Inexcusable

1. GLM feels that a book on Manley is all but useless without a parallel book on Bustamante. This is, of course, an inexcusable denance of the proven individuality of each of these two important political leaders. For though both men interrelated in an organic process, each, presumably, had his own individual vision and style of expressing it — hence a PNP vis-a-vis a JLP.

Manley and the New Jamaica cannot be regarded as definitive of either Manley (he was too many-sided a person to be seen merely as the a-political politician he was) or of the entire period. Many volumes must now follow. Already there is Dr. Trevor Murree's study of the period in terms of "political decolonisation". An official biography of Manley is being

prepared by the novelist Vic Reid and one of Bustamante by the writer Sylvia Wynter. At least one other scholar, Prof. George Eaton, is working on Bustamante and the ideas surrounding labour union and politics. The well-known journalist, Frank Hill, is also working at something. Only such a corpus of works with an attendant body of scholarly criticisms could ever become near being definitive in dealing with the crucial period 1933 to Independence.

GLM begs the question, therefore, when he knocks down claims which Manley and the new Jamaica never once makes for itself.

One senses in GLM's review an air of unjustifiable concern that his favourite hero has been shortchanged. The book after all was about Manley's speeches and writings. The perversity of wanting a book on Bustamante out of a book on Manley (and presumably vice versa) leads to perversity number two.

2. With crass political naivete, GLM measures influence in government under colonialism by simply totalling the years one leader carried the title of Government (or Chief Minister or even Prime Minister). The conclusion is that Bustamante deserved more consideration for analysis for having been in power four terms to Manley's two. But within Jamaica itself, Manley's ideas about nation-building, which is what the book is about pervaded the entire lifestyle of the polity ever since the formation of the PNP in 1933.

The principle that political influence does not require actual presence operated in Bustamante's own case: Busta detained was Busta legitimised. Prison graduates in and out of prison are powerful features of colonial politics throughout the Third World. Manley and his party had a tremendous influence on the general direction of politics between 1944 and 1955 when Bustamante was "in power". For it was they who talked a great deal and enunciated the so-called plans for action, "PNP issues", from socialism to self-government, were an ever-present element in the political dynamics of the polity — negatively or positively.

### Willy Nilly

That is what gives to the Manley party a continuing impact on the Jamaican polity, not the number of years spent as supervisors of the British authority, rather than as top management in full control of the political decision-taking process.

Quite apart from not understanding the mechanism of

colonial politics during the era of phased transfer of power, GLM understands even less the "mind" of post-war Colonial Office.

Nowhere was that policy of phased transfer systematically blueprinted for the Caribbean territories individually before say, 1960. Yet GLM glibly asserts that there were "promises of the Colonial Office that willy nilly, full political independence would be granted to both Jamaica and Trinidad whether the Federation stood or fell." The reviewer does not make clear as to when such "promises" were made, though he seems to wish to give the impression that they were made before or even soon after Manley (and Bustamante) decided to enter the West Indian Federation.

It has long been fashionable to bait the Federation idea and GLM indulges this fashion with that undoubted confidence that can still be mustered in many quarters. In the wider concept of regional co-operation, however, GLM may yet be proven wrong if his argument about waste of energy and time during the years 1958-1961.

Even if Jamaica were "wrong" in the method of Federation, there is nothing in later developments which has proven her wrong-headed on the principle of Caribbean regionalism. CARIFTA has been formed and the University continues as a regional institution. Nations are not exactly built on short-term goals only and the idea of immediate sacrifices in the interest of future generations is a characteristic of the period under review — a characteristic that is too often dismissed as lack of political acumen.

Manley's attack on Bustamante which GLM cites with disapproval could be seen in this a difference between interest in power and interest in nationhood, which brings me around to perversity number four.

4. GLM in effect chastises a Jamaican nationalist leader for being concerned first and foremost about Jamaica when he dismisses Manley's speeches as revealing "a narrowness of interest".

He goes on: "It is nearly impossible to detect one mention of the United Nations, the place of the Caribbean in world politics."

This is not only perverse, it is feigned ignorance of what the leader stood for and reveals an added contempt for the Jamaicans' desire to discover life for themselves and in their own terms. To begin with, GLM refuses to acknowledge the already numerous

points of reference which betray a dependence on the outside world. Where does GLM think Socialism came from, of the Westminster model and ideas about the rule of law, etc.?

If anything, Manley's interest was not "narrow" enough for many of the tasks he set himself. In this Bustamante had decidedly instant advantages over his rival cousin since his "labourism" was decidedly home-grown Jamaican product and remained a powerful force against the PNP's extra-territorial preoccupations with building "socialist" society.

More importantly, Manley's politics transcended GLM's "narrow interests" in his own view that the essence of politics was the articulation of a disinterested world view of the purpose of man in a humane and rationally organised polity (see speeches throughout). For him this would have had to be achieved in terms of Jamaican life and experience.

For his role, as his speeches and writings clearly stated, was to make Jamaicans recognise and accept that the focus of their concern must be Jamaica and not England or the United States. GLM apparently forgets that the self-government movement preceded the formation of the United Nations, that the lives of the people were dominated by outside influences and that those narrow speeches were an attempt to get people to believe in themselves.

The fact that all this is now taken for granted should not detract from the tremendous force this has been in the development of modern Jamaica. Yet although at that time there was no Third World as we understand it today, Manley's party went in touch with India in her struggles for Independence — it did with Ghana and Nigeria later on.

### Reprehensible

The charge of "narrowness" is implied in the criticism of the style and range of editorship. The fact is the editor prepared that book for Jamaican and West Indian leadership, not for Britons and Americans as so many of us still feel we ought to do when we publish.

The audience is HERE, not there and the perpetuation of the habit of looking at ourselves through the eyes of others is reprehensible. Let the outside reader stretch his imagination to our situation as we are forced to do with respect to books written by



Englishmen and Americans for their own people. The reviewer unfortunately betrays that unforgivable and unacceptable position that this society has no capacity for internal creative integration and expression. This is about the whole spirit of self-government which is what Manley and the New Jamaica is about.

Men." Manley once remarked: "stand strongest when they are their own masters." They would do well for Jamaica who have come after, never to forget this simple thought

5. Perversity number five flows naturally from number four above. It has to do with the reviewer's observations on Manley's socialism and there are quite predictable. They reflect the stock criticisms of all who have walked the path of democratic socialism including the British Fabians. It is in effect saying that Manley should have adopted revolutionary overthrow of colonial Jamaica or forget about socialism.

This echoes the argument of one school of analysts who would take a decidedly Marxist-Leninist position. Manley never pretended to be a Marxist and though he stubbornly held on to the label "socialism" he repeatedly found difficulties in making the imported creed fit into his Jamaican perceptions.

It is hardly surprising that in his attempt to invest the importation with some relevance, he ended up delivering less than the textbooks demanded. Most socialists who have borrowed the creed have been unwitting "revisionists". The pattern persists with a vengeance.

A family tree of socialism would produce at least 12 branches, to say nothing of the divisions within each branch or strain. Perhaps there is something the matter with the wholesale importation of creeds from elsewhere and a discussion of Manley's socialism in the light of this well-known dilemma would have given GLM's arguments more point.

It is significant that the reviewer asks whether Manley was Marxist ... Fabian ... Owenite ... Fourerian or Clement Attlee. Nowhere is the question put as to whether Manley was himself. We are here still being subjected to the domination of European thought wholesale. Borrowings from that continent not infrequently undergo a sea-change and understandably so.

Indeed socialism with its source of energy coming from elsewhere would seem ephemeral in a situation which was concerned primarily with transforming Jamaicans into architects of their own destinies.

Of course there were (and are) contradictions, all of which need to be the subject of thorough examination and analysis if the study of Jamaican politics is to use its data meaningfully. Perhaps there is something in the nature of that intensely European creed—socialism—that Third World countries should examine more carefully.

The reviewer's position is seemingly that of an old-fashioned adherent of a ... Manley for not constructing "a perfect fetus in the rotting womb" of the old colonial society and ignores the fact that Manley was quite rightly "pre-occupied with the techniques of delivery and infant care".

## Compromise

6. GLM deliberately misreads into the text interpretations that would make Manley either into a fake or an "opportunist" as he calls him early in the review.

Politics remains the art of the possible and democracy implies compromise. The founding of Jamaica Welfare Limited is now given to the capitalist "Zemurray" because Mr. Manley was gracious enough to give due credit to a capitalist who was perceptive enough to read the signs of the times. One might as well condemn the founding of the Christian Church by the former arch-enemy of Christ, St. Paul.

But this is not the point. Jamaica Welfare Limited (later Commission) was founded by Manley, not Zemurray — in Manley's pro-socialist days admittedly. But it was founded not to kill the "co-operative idea" as GLM suggests, but rather to promote it through voluntary service throughout the length and breadth of Jamaica.

That same Welfare Commission was to serve as a "social beacon", until it was restructured not only for the Caribbean, but the entire developing world in a way that the Banana Producers Co-op might have never had. The reviewer has no facts to support the implication that the Co-operative would have survived the ravages of World War II which came hard on the heels of the Manley-Zemurray negotiation.

It ought here to be pointed out that the "co-operative principle" has had limited application in Jamaica despite the time and money spent to promote organisations of one kind or another. An examination of the social mechanism of the society with regard to this would probably give us clues to the situation

back in 1937 rather than the facile resort to the now commonplace ideological categories of capitalism versus socialism.

7. The reviewer indulges the habit now increasing, evident among so-called intellectuals in their criticism of their colleagues' work. This turns or personal insult rather than on scholarly detached analysis. GLM's reference to Castro's sincerity in risking his life for his people, implying that Manley did not, is a piece of irrelevance that eschews honest analysis of the Cuban situation vis-a-vis the Jamaican circumstances.

No one man makes a revolution, of the type the reviewer seems to support. There is a thing called "consciousness" and the people of Jamaica, on whose behalf reformers declare so much, ought at least be taken into account in the matter.

Lest it be forgotten, Manley and his party were certainly rejected, among other things, for their flirtation with a Leftist creed while the rival party won overwhelming support on a political platform that had no pretensions revolutionary fervour.

GLM behaves as though the country was ready for it and one man perniciously betrayed it. I am yet to be convinced that Jamaica wanted socialism.

There is another piece of personal invective by GLM which has no place in a responsible review. It refers to Manley's repeated call for voluntary leadership. GLM ungraciously accuses Manley of exploiting clients as a successful barrister "with his Oxford degrees" while asking the "little men in the country to serve on the Parochial Board and be reimbursed at threepence."

This is of course false. GLM ignores the fact that despite his "high fees" Manley did poor, which can hardly be said of many Third World politicians of his stature. Nor is the free legal service he gave throughout his career taken into account.

The reviewer goes on to make matchstick of "the philosophy of unpaid volunteer work". But just as the Church and political parties in Jamaica have benefited from voluntary service, so must the rest of public life. Otherwise, the graft and corruption in public life will be that river coming from the smallest mercenary stream. Moreover, if we sit all serious about participatory democracy then the voluntary way is one of the best methods of achieving it. In this Manley was right.

## Hypocritical

There is still another piece of personal attack which is seemingly designed to discredit Manley's sincerity. In his speech "Mission Accomplished" he supported the Black Power movement.

GLM implies that Manley was here being hypocritical since, according to GLM, he had never mentioned the colour problem in his thirty years of political activity. I refer him to the speech of 1939 recorded on pp 108-109.

I should also refer him to his speech on the Ras Tafari (pp 278-80), a movement which Manley, more than any other of his colleagues understood, and he took steps to give that movement recognition in its cry for Black liberation.

Far from being 'unfortunate' or 'sad' it was remarkable to see that at his age he could grasp the significance of Black Power when the Establishment (including the Church and many in both political parties) regarded it as something evil to be exorcised from our multi-racial midst.

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The support he gave may very soon be vindicated. Black Power has not surprisingly settled into its natural place in the society. Manley undoubtedly indulged the sensibilities of his generation and subsumed the issue of "colour" under the rationalist ideal, just as Bustamante subsumed it under a labourist label.

Starting with the Rastafarians, however, that dimension of our life was brought back into focus — a fact which Manley instinctively grasped and respected. To deny him, then, any sincerity in his understanding of the colour problem is to ignore the facts as recorded in the very book being reviewed.

His support for Black Power in his final speech was a logical development. He was not exactly closed to new ideas and he took the trouble to read much of the available literature on the movements in the Third World—a most unusual thing for most politicians of his time and an example which latter-day leaders would be well advised to follow, that is keeping abreast of contemporary social and political thought.

This is only one of the many lessons to be learnt from the period in which Manley flourished and to which he contributed. As Manley understood it, his end marked a new beginning for Jamaica and it would be foolish for anyone not to read Manley and the New Jamaica with this very important fact in mind. It is unfortunate that GLM failed in this very important task.