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SIR
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1911 - 1967

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SIR DONALD BURNS SANGSTER

1911 - 1967



SIR DONALD BURNS SANGSTER, Jamaica's second Prime Minister since Independence, was born on October 23, 1911, in the parish of St. Elizabeth. He was the son of the late W. B. Sangster, a Commissioned Land Surveyor and Mrs. Sangster. He was educated at Munro College in Jamaica (1921-29) where he was outstanding in a number of sports.

After leaving High School Mr. Sangster started studying to be a Solicitor but before he finished these studies he took the first step in his political career. He was elected to the St. Elizabeth Parochial Board in 1933 when he was only 21. Mr. Sangster's entry into politics was in the family tradition; one of his uncles, Mr. Watt Sangster was one of a small group of Jamaican born legislators led by Mr. J. A. G. Smith who challenged the absolute supremacy of the Colonial Governors in the 20's and 30's.

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ADMITTED AS SOLICITOR

In 1937, Mr. Sangster was admitted as a Solicitor and in 1941, he took another step forward in his political career when he was elected Vice-Chairman of the St. Elizabeth Parochial Board.

In December 1944, Jamaica had its first General Elections under the New Constitution which granted Universal Adult Suffrage; Mr. Sangster contested but lost the South St. Elizabeth seat as an independent candidate.

CHAIRMAN OF PAROCHIAL BOARD

In 1949 he was elected Chairman of the Parochial Board; in that same year, Mr. Sangster joined the Jamaica Labour Party, won the South St. Elizabeth seat in the General Elections and was appointed Minister for Social Welfare in the new Government.

FIRST DEPUTY LEADER OF JLP

In 1950, he was appointed First Deputy Leader of the Jamaica Labour Party; in 1953 when Sir Harold Allan, the JLP's Minister of Finance died, he was given that post; he was also given added responsibility as Leader of the House.

At about this time, the Federal idea received some impetus and a Regional Economic Conference was set up. Mr. Sangster was appointed as Jamaica's delegate to this organization.

LOSES SEAT

In the General Elections of February 1955 Mr. Sangster's political career suffered a temporary setback when the JLP was defeated and he lost his seat.

For a while Mr. Sangster concentrated on his law practice, but in 1956 he won the North-east Clarendon seat in a by-election.

REGAINS OLD PORTFOLIOS

He continued as a member of the Opposition until 1962 when, after the dissolution of the Federation, General Elections were held to determine which party would form the Government to lead Jamaica into independence. The Jamaica Labour Party was successful and Mr. Sangster was given his old portfolios of Minister of Finance and Leader of the House. Shortly after he was named Deputy Prime Minister to Sir Alexander Bustamante.

PUBLIC SERVICE

For two decades before independence, Mr. Sangster had served on a number of public boards and committees. He had been a member of the Manning Home Advisory Committee and of the East and West St. Elizabeth School Boards; he had been a Director of Jamaica Vegetables Ltd. from 1943 to 1949, captained the Nethersole Cricket team from his parish in 1949 and played a prominent part in the scouting activities of his native parish, St. Elizabeth. He had been a member of the Munro & Dickenson Trust and the Black River Drainage & Irrigation Board and a member of the Board of Governors of the Institute of Jamaica. Between 1950 and 1952 he had been Jamaica's delegate to conferences in New Zealand, Ceylon, Barbados, London and Canada.

With Independence, Mr. Sangster's public activities increased dramatically. He sat on the Jamaican delegation that received formal admission to the United Nations on September 18, 1962.

As the nation's chief financial spokesman he attended many international conferences at which his ability and personal friendliness and charm won international respect not only for himself but for Jamaica.

ACTS AS PRIME MINISTER

In 1964 the Prime Minister, Sir Alexander Bustamante fell ill and Mr. Sangster acted as Prime Minister for a short while. Sir Alexander resumed office in a few months but with a reduced work load and Mr. Sangster undertook some of the tasks of the Prime Minister's Office.

In January 1965, Sir Alexander was stricken again but this time he remained incapacitated. Mr. Sangster assumed the onerous responsibilities of the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Defence, in addition to his regular duties as Minister of Finance.

Mr. Sangster was leader of Jamaica's delegations to the Commonwealth Economic Consultative Council Conferences in 1951, 1963, 1964, 1965 and 1966. Jamaica was the host country for this Conference in 1965 and Mr. Sangster presided over the sessions. He also led Jamaica's delegation to the World Bank & International Monetary Fund Meetings in Washington, U.S.A. in 1963, 1964, 1965 and 1966. Mr. Sangster was a Governor of the World Bank from 1963 until his death.

Mr. Sangster was a member of Jamaica's delegation to the Heads of Commonwealth Caribbean Countries Conferences in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad, in 1963 and in Kingston, Jamaica, in 1964; he led the delegation to these Conferences in Georgetown, Guyana (then British Guiana) in 1965, and in Bridgetown, Barbados in 1966. He also led Jamaica's delegation to the Canada-Commonwealth Caribbean Countries Conference in Ottawa, Canada, in July, 1966.

Mr. Sangster accompanied Sir Alexander Bustamante to the Commonwealth Prime Minister's Conference in London, England, 1962, and he attended this Conference as Sir Alexander's representative in 1964. He attended as Acting Prime Minister the Conferences in London in 1965, in Lagos, Nigeria, in 1966, and in London in 1966.

He was Chairman of the University of the West Indies Grants Committee from 1963 until his death.

BECOMES PRIME MINISTER

Mr. Sangster led his party to victory at the General Elections on February 21, 1967 and was sworn in as Prime Minister on February 22, 1967.

He had completed forming his Cabinet and was examining proposals for Government's 1967-1968 Budget when he was taken ill on Saturday, March 18. He was rushed to the Montreal Neurological Institute in Canada on Monday, March 20.

Her Majesty the Queen conferred the title of Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order on Mr. Sangster on April 7,

Despite expert medical attention at the Neurological Institute, Sir Donald died at 12.45 p.m. on Tuesday, April 11, 1967.

He was given a state funeral on Monday, April 17 and was buried in the George VI Memorial Park in Kingston.