

Seaga's dream of colonial Jamaica

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There is a growing number of people of the opinion that although Edward Seaga is not the charismatic leader that Michael Manley is at the rate that things are going he could win the next election — if he would only just keep his mouth shut.

Everytime he opens his mouth, it becomes clearer and clearer that he has no alternative to offer this country. More than that, he wants to return us to colonialism — American-style.

His latest pronouncements to the annual awards banquet of the Jamaica Manufacturers Association last weekend amounted to him offering to put us in the back pocket of the United States, by getting us annexed to that great "asset" north of us.

It seems Mr. Seaga has forgotten we are still in the process of shaking off the shackles of British Colonialism, and that with many of its scars still fresh and painful, the last thing we need now is to be tied to the apron string of America.

A STATE?

AGAINST a background where Mr. Seaga has not denied the allegation that he is a source of U.S. intelligence in Jamaica, one is persuaded to believe that he has begun to lay the ground for making us an appendage to the U.S. if and when he gets the chance, or maybe even get us declared the 51st state.



JENNIFER FRENCH

In fact, most of Mr. Seaga's political campaign over the last six months has been conducted for the benefit of the United States, rather than for the electorate of this country on whose vote he must get, to be in the driving seat here.

Becoming the baby of the American press in maintaining this country might enhance his image in the State Department, but one can hardly see how an overseas campaign can win him votes, unless of course, he is hoping that the 20,000 Jamaicans who migrated within the last year will fly home to vote for him.

That, however, still leaves the other two million of us still here. By virtue of sheer numbers we at home should be his major consideration.

It is not enough for Mr. Seaga to bank on the hope that the increasing numbers of Jamaicans who have become disillusioned with the Manley Government are going to vote the JLP into office without some sensible base for turning around the economy.

He and the JLP have wised up fast and dropped its "turn them back" slogan that it so misguidedly used in the last election. His party came to realise, albeit after losing the election, that there is nothing that the PNP has done that it can turn back.

RIGHT

IT CANNOT turn back equal pay for women, it cannot turn back minimum wage, the Status of Children's Act, or any of the other progressive things that Jamaicans have come to accept as their right.

Mr. Seaga should also remember that the level of political awareness has increased significantly since his party was removed from office in 1972, and that after 17 years of independence from Britain, we are not ready for his brand of dependency on the United States.

What we are ready for are economic buoyancy, the creation of employment for the increasing labour force, the production base with which to fight inflation. But this is totally different from merely becoming an appendage to the United States — Puerto Rican style.

The PNP government, with its consort the IMF, has effectively robbed us of economic independence, but the model that Mr. Seaga is suggesting for us, if he wins, is the other extreme.

FRINGES

ON THE SURFACE 'Operation Bootstrap' might suggest prosperity, but there are too many glaring examples around the world where numerous multi-national factories, high rise buildings and the like suggest — economic buoyancy at one level, while the majority of the people in the country live in utter poverty on the fringes of society.

We want increased economic activity, increased foreign investment, but we do not want the blatant exploitation of our human and natural resources, something that has always characterised that kind of open door economic policy.

The United States is undeniably one of our assets. We have always known this, and the thousands of Jamaicans who have migrated there to seek their fortunes and the hundreds more who line up outside the U.S. embassy daily attest to this.

We also want to be sensible and make use of our assets, and not isolate any of them unnecessarily — something which this government mistakenly did. But tying us to the apron strings of any of the "assets" is entering an entirely new ball game.