

Sunday, December 7, 1980

FOR THE PAST five years, Jamaica's political life has revolved around two men — Michael Manley, the leader of the Peoples National Party, and Edward Seaga the leader of the Jamaica Labour Party. Their contrasts are evident to anybody who watches television: Manley exudes great charm, conviviality and wit and his speeches tend to be scintillating artistic presentations that bring listeners to paroxysms of applause. Seaga for his part seems almost dour, and while his speeches have their quota of humour, his presentations tend to be fact-filled recitations that bludgeon the listener into submission and awe, not excitement.

A few weeks before the election I talked with one of Jamaica's political insiders, a man who was at one time at the heart of the PNP apparatus, but who switched sometime last year, and found himself at the heart of the JLP apparatus during the recent election campaign. In the course of our talk, I asked him his views of Manley and Seaga from his unique perspective of having worked closely with both men.

"Well", he began "Michael has two grave character flaws. First, he wants to be regarded

as a nice fellow, a great fellow, by everybody. There is no question that he doesn't like it if you say one of his ideas was bullshit. And he likes to be praised for a good speech, etc. The second thing is that he is very good at ideas. And he is quick. He can decide on the essential points in no time. But he never thinks through a problem.

"By contrast, Eddie isn't quick, but he has two things that Michael doesn't have. Michael can't tell a man he has fouled up, that a policy or suggestion can't work. Michael is not a tough position man. He can't do it with his own people, only with the enemy — the JLP. Eddie can tell a man he is wrong. Eddie must also see how a policy can be implemented before he agrees to it.

An insider's view of the differences between them



THE PRAGMATIST... AND THE MAN OF IDEAS.

Michael is. Michael is more like Busta.

"Eddie is very reserved and very withdrawn. He really is the Norman Manley type. He will come in a room where people are working on the campaign for him with just a hello to everybody, will talk to the one person he came to see for, say five minutes, and then he is gone. But not Michael. He'll come in a room, and smile, and shake hands all round, and say something to every person in the room.

"Michael is more given to lengthy debate while Eddie is more prone to decision making. He will say 'this is the decision — let's move on' "

You can obviously talk back to Michael and argue with him, I observe, but can you argue with Eddie?

"I see guys, his MPs, argue back with him", my respondent says, "but since he isn't a warm personality, and isn't welcoming, people may not go forward to talk to him. Mind you, I've yet to meet a political leader who welcomes criticism. But I have never had a problem with giving criticism to either Michael or Eddie".

I ask my respondent if he felt Michael and Eddie did much reading, and kept up with what

A matter of personality

DECISION

Could he possibly change his method of operations if he won again, I asked.

"No. He can't change. It's not his personality. He'll no more take tough decisions in the third term than in the first term. Another thing is he doesn't back up his lieutenants. He doesn't give them any support if they come under attack. Instead, he says this is the democratic way. Eddie is different. That is why he had that confrontation with his fellow ministers in the last years of the Shearer administration.

"Eddie has the toughness of Norman Manley. I don't think he has the character, but he is more like Norman than

"Michael can't run a Government because he doesn't have a disciplined approach. You go to Jamaica House for an 11:30 appointment and at 12:30 you are just going in to see him. Eddie has an agenda for his meetings and brings you back to the point if you stray away from it. Michael has no agenda, and people chat all sorts of crap and don't proceed in an orderly way. They don't pre-plan anything.

I don't think Michael has the discipline to sit down and manage something for eight hours at a stretch. Also, he can't sort out the priorities of a programme of action, nor follow up and fire the non-performers. He fired one Minister, and when the Minister came to his office and cried, he re-appointed him. Michael can't take the tough decisions that often need to be taken about the people around him. He can't 'cut off a head'. He can confront the opposition, but not those close to him.

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was happening in the world of
of ideas.

"I read a lot", he replied,
"and I got the feeling from
talking with Michael that he
was keeping up with what was
being written in many areas. I
got the feeling he reads. And
he is deep on the philosophy of
politics. Eddie is not deep in
this way. He is a pragmatist:

'How are we going to get it to
work? How are we going to
implement it?' Those
questions came from him
repeatedly as we worked on
the JLP Manifesto.

RESULTS

"They are totally different
men. Totally different. There
are no similarities in their
personalities. Michael can be
effervescent, and bubble over
with excitement. I've never
seen Eddie effervesce, and I
have known him since school
days. Even then, he never got
excited. I've seen Michael get
an orgasm over an idea. I've
never seen Eddie like that.

And I think that is one of
Michael's great troubles. I've
seen him sell himself an idea,
then he doesn't know what to
do with it. He's implemented
more ideas than any other
Government, but doesn't seem
to get anything to work. You
must give them (the PNP
Government) credit: they
have performed better in the
area of housing than anybody

else, but
not in
other areas.

"What is
worrying
Michael
to death
is that
Eddie
will take
all of his
ideas — good
ideas —

and make them work. Eddie
believes in well structured,
well managed programmes,
for example the Urban
Development Programme. He
says, 'give me no speeches,
give me results'.