

by the Political Reporter

# Edward Seaga Political Man of the Year

IT IS CUSTOMARY at the end of every year for this column to name a Political Man or Woman of the Year — that is the person who, in the opinion of this column, has done more to influence the trends and developments of Jamaican politics — for good or bad — over the past twelve months.

It is customary also that neither of Jamaica's two political giants is named, for both Mr. Manley and Sir Alexander Bustamante stand head and shoulders above their colleagues in politics so much so that they would run away with the nomination every year.

This year was no exception to this rule. Sir Alexander Bustamante was undoubtedly the most dominant political factor this year by reason of his performance in the Referendum. But it is natural that this should be so. He is in the position to dominate such a development and he did dominate it and create the position where this island is now poised to jump off into formal independence.

But apart from the two there are other politicians who have influenced the political scene and spring readily to mind. They are Millard Johnson, who has formerly been in the People's Political Party, and the 196 Edward Seaga, the Assistant Secretary of the Jamaica Labour Party. Both loomed large on the island's political scene in differing ways, Mr. Johnson in a negative way, through fear, Mr. Seaga in a positive way through his work in the leadership of the Jamaica Labour Party. Mr. Seaga's preeminence, therefore, could be due to circumstances — he belongs to an already established political party and is therefore in a position to influence the course of political life, while Mr. Johnson belongs to no established political party and does not at this writing appear to be in a position to influence voting trends in Jamaica in any but a negative and perhaps irritating way.

For these reasons therefore I unhesitatingly select Mr. Seaga as 1961's Political Man of the Year.

## Seaga's claim ...

WHAT are Mr. Seaga's claims to this distinction? In the first place, Mr. Seaga has played a more significant role in revitalising the Jamaica Labour Party than any other single member of that Party. It is no secret that the new forward-looking and almost left-wing policies of the JLP (indeed they are indistinguishable from the PNP's) has been due to his influence on the JLP executive and as Chairman of the party's Policy Planning Committee. He has given a positive bent to the JLP policy where before it was vague and non-committal.

That is the first basic contribution Mr. Seaga made to the political shape of things in Jamaica in 1961.

The second was the work he did during the Referendum campaign. With Mr. Clement Tavares, of South-Western St. Andrew, he was one of Sir Alexander Bustamante's principal lieutenants, and the JLP's organization and campaign during that period largely turned upon his efforts. He keynoted the whole of that campaign as the principal economic spokesman for the JLP and probably campaigned throughout the island more thoroughly than any other member of the JLP to gain the desired result.

But it is not for these things only that Mr. Seaga made his impact on the political scene this year. Indeed, the most important feature of his career this year was the furore he awakened over his proposition about the "Haves" and "Have-Nots".

No previous Budget Session of the Jamaica Legislature approached the controversial excitement of the past Budget Session and his statements and propositions about this still controversial subject — not all Jamaicans are sure who is right — underlined in part the decision of the Government to depart from traditional Budget making this year even though Government spokesmen insisted that Mr. Seaga had misinterpreted the economic facts of life in Jamaica.

Mr. Seaga forced not only his own party but the PNP as well to pay more attention to fundamentals of political economies, the Government's expert planners to examine the relevant factors and the legislators to ponder, to think and to explain. In this particular he brought a new life to Budget discussions in Jamaica which had nothing to do with the traditional bridge here, the

school there, the road in that constituency or the money provided for the Jamaica Agricultural Society and its 'use' or 'misuse' by officers of the Society.

Mr. Seaga is relatively new on the political scene and many people do not know who he is. At present he is the youngest member of the Legislative Council, indeed the youngest member of the island's legislature. He is 31. A Bachelor of Arts of Harvard University in Social Science, Mr. Seaga was born in Boston. He has been connected with the University College, as an undergrad studying medicine with the aim of later doing psychiatry, as a research worker in sociology and anthropology and in Jamaican cults and folklore, and as a lecturer in the Extra-mural Department.

Perhaps this mixture of Boston and Harvard and of his in-the-field research among pocomanians, rastafarian and simple village folk, has shaped Mr. Seaga's particular role in politics. My own view that this mixture — the puritanism of Eton and Harvard, and the naked primitive facts of Jamaica village life — has tended to give Mr. Seaga an almost stern Biblical mien, harsh and unbending about his own prejudices and beliefs, which does not stop to consider that the other man may well be right. But this is a trait that can take a politician very far. At least one other politician in Jamaica has it and he has gone far.

It was in 1959 that Mr. Seaga joined the Jamaica Labour Party and was appointed a member of the Legislative Council. The following year he was elected Assistant Secretary of the JLP, and this year he was appointed Chairman of the party's Policy Committee.

Although he is still a member of the Legislative Council, where he is one of the outstanding members, Mr. Seaga wants to get into the stream of active grassroots politics. He will campaign as a candidate for the JLP in West Kingston during the forthcoming elections, (replacing the Hon. Hugh Shearer).