

SHEARER QUITS JLP LEADERSHIP

No word from Seaga; Hill eyes the post

BY EWART WALTERS

Jamaica's political spotlight swung sharply back on West Kingston MP Eddie Seaga yesterday following a JLP meeting Monday night at which Opposition Leader Hugh Shearer announced he was quitting the party leadership.



MR. SEAGA... playing his cards close.



MR. HILL ... named a possible successor.

No sooner was Mr. Shearer's meaning clear to the party executive meeting at the Medallion Room of the Courtleigh Manor Hotel, than the telephone lines to Mr. Seaga's house started humming.

Would he come back to take over the leadership, the callers wanted to know.

But the man who on November 27, 1973 told the Daily News he had no wish to be party leader, the man who two days later announced he was taking two years' leave from the JLP, was playing his cards very close to the chest.

Mr. Seaga could not be reached yesterday, but an informed source said he had given no satisfaction so far to those who were calling him back.

Mr. Seaga may have to share the political spotlight — at least for a while. It is understood that former Housing Minister Wilton Hill said yesterday he was interested in the party leadership.

OTHER CONTENDERS

But Mr. Hill will have to seek a constituency in which to run next election. He is still MP for South West St. Andrew but he advised his constituents in April that he was not planning to contest that seat in the next election.

Among other likely contenders are former attorney Ian Ramsay, former Senator Frank Phipps, and Senator Charles.

Political observers feel, however, that it is unlikely any of these will make a move until Mr. Seaga's position is quite clear.

Mr. Shearer was not at the meeting when it started, but the meeting read a letter from him in which he said he would not be seeking election as Leader at the party's conference scheduled for November 23.

Mr. Shearer was called to the meeting and when he came, restated his position.

In a release yesterday he said his decision arises from "the increased volume of work required in the new programme mapped out for the JLP's national campaign, with emphasis on working class interest and welfare through the BITU of which I am Vice-President.

"It will not be physically possible for me to continue to carry the responsibilities of leadership involved for both organisations, to cope with the programmes which have been designed."

Wednesday, October 2, 1974

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FIRST TIME

Whoever succeeds Mr. Shearer will be elected at November's party conference. November will mark the first time that Sir Alexander Bustamante will not be JLP Leader. The last party conference decided that effective this year Sir Alexander would be termed "The Chief", and below him would be the Leader, First Deputy Leader and three Deputy Leaders of equal standing.

Mr. Shearer took over as Jamaica's third Prime Minister following the death in Montreal, Canada, of Prime Minister Donald Sangster in March 1967.

Because the General Elections of 1967 were held on February 21, the only general election campaign to which Mr. Shearer led his party was the island's seventh on February 28, 1972.

The JLP then became the Opposition, Mr. Shearer lost the Prime Ministership to Michael Manley, and there have been discussions about the effectiveness of the JLP leadership ever since.