

# Mr. Shearer

To me, Mr. Shearer is an enigma. After more than three decades as a trade unionist and 27 years as a politician, it is still difficult to say exactly what he stands for.

He has had an interesting political life. He first became an M.P. (then M.H.R.) in 1955, representing the West Kingston constituency, which the present P.M., Mr. Seaga, has held since 1962. He then lost the seat in 1959, sat out the 1962 elections, and then took over Sir Alexander's Clarendon constituency in 1967. He barely retained it in 1972, then won comfortably in 1976 and again in 1980.

Mr. Shearer first assumed Ministerial responsibility in 1962 when as a Senator he was the country's DE FACTO Foreign Minister, although the portfolio was held officially by Sir Alexander. During that five-year period, he really had everything going his way because as Sir Alex's heir apparent in the BITU, a Senator without constituency obligations, he had the best of several worlds. He had influence and authority but no real responsibilities.

The death of Sir Donald Sangster in 1967 changed that situation considerably as he now had to assume duties as Prime Minister and also tend to his constituency.

HIS FIVE-YEAR tenure as Prime Minister was not a happy one as he was presiding over a society in crisis. — Unemployment and crime increased rapidly and there was an increasing militancy and awareness amongst the youth, influenced in a large measure by the Civil Rights movement in the U.S.A.

The jealousies and conflicts within his Cabinet did not help him either and so one could understand if he breathed a sigh of relief at the defeat of his party in 1972. This defeat in 1972 was followed in 1974 by his resignation as leader of the JLP, ostensibly to return full-time to union activities.

The return to power of the JLP in the October 1980 elections saw Mr. Shearer reassuming responsibility for Foreign Affairs. He was also named as Deputy Prime Minister by Mr. Seaga. This period in the Cabinet must be a strange one for Mr. Shearer.

His previous ten-year stint saw him in a situation of either the favourite son (1962-67) or top mah (1967-72). Now, he is second in command but with colleagues, some of whom he obviously differs with on basic issues.

Mr. Shearer confuses me because the components do not seem to add up to a logical structure.

Here is a man who although having long experience in union and political life is still chronologically young as a leader. (In fact, in China, India or the Soviet Union, he would be a "youth".) What are his ambitions?

In the 1974-1980 period when because of Mr. Manley being occupied in another position, he ruled unchallenged as the voice of the unions; he consolidated his position, within the trade union movement. Hence within that sector, his union credentials rank first; his political affiliation is secondary. The trade unions regard him as their main man in the Cabinet. They feel that he will stand up for them on issues because he knows his roots.

Not being privy to Cabinet deliberations, I do not know whether Mr. Shearer does play the role the unions expect of him. What I do know is that his public utterances have given clear indication that he differs on several issues not only with the views of individual Cabinet colleagues but also with official Government policy.

Mr. Shearer has chosen various occasions to illustrate his differences with the views and policies of his party and Government. In a speech to the Bankers' Association, he pointed out in a logical and straight-forward manner the inherent dangers of the trader mentality.

As wily as a politician as he is, he must have realized that these views had much more in common with the Budget contribution of Mr. Seymour Mullings, the Opposition's spokesman on Finance, than with that of his leader, the Prime Minister.

His speech at the United Nations condemning the South African in-



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ursion into Angola must have raised the eyebrows of the U.S. representatives. He completely omitted reference to the role of the Soviets in supporting the Angolan Government which the U.S. had used in an attempt to justify their public indifference to the South African attacks.

This omission must have been a surprise to our U.S. friends who would have been expecting greater support from us. I wonder whether there were no probing questions as to exactly where does this Government stand.

IN A SIMILAR VEIN was his speech to the Diplomatic Heads of mission in which he called for immediate action on the NIEO. Contrast this with Minister Vaz's arrogant and uninformed dismissal of the question as being too long term and hence of no immediate relevance. In that speech Mr. Shearer then went further by implicitly condemning the hypocritical nature of those who have been self-righteous about Poland but condone repressive actions elsewhere. Note carefully his statement:

"THE REPRESSION of the black people in South Africa is no less reprehensible than suppression and martial law anywhere else, and demands no less condemnation and action."

Finally, Mr. Shearer's approach to the solution of the bauxite dispute is as much a rejection of the style and manner of Mr. J.A.G. Smith as it is testimony to his skills as a negotiator. His ability to bring about a settlement was due in no small way to the fact that the workers felt that they could trust him. Mr. Smith neither had this trust to begin with nor did he go out of his way to cultivate it.

The past 16 months as Deputy Prime Minister must have tested Mr. Shearer's negotiating skills in the strangest way because he has been bargaining with himself. He has been able to maintain his public credibility as being pro-worker, pro-Third World causes and a nationalist, while being second in command of a Government which either explicitly or implicitly seems to flirt with stances diametrically opposed to these positions.

4/3/1982