

## MR. SHEARER

Without campaigning for the high responsibility, Mr. Hugh Shearer has been drafted from amongst his colleagues of the Jamaica Labour Party to be the new Prime Minister. The sudden tragic removal of Sir Donald Sangster must have meant that no one in the Party was at that time having hopes of succession. Sir Donald was young, and he was well and truly in the saddle. And then almost instantly there was the vacancy looming! It was at this point that Mr. Shearer, who by all reports was not an active candidate before, came to be considered as the logical successor.

Health or temperament or both seemed to have given doubts to the wisdom of choosing Mr. Lightbourne or Mr. Tavares. In a sense, therefore, Mr. Shearer's choice was a compromise, as so often these large national decisions have to be. Whether a choice by compromise or by compulsion, Mr. Shearer now has the full responsibility in his own right to discharge the duties and responsibilities of Prime Minister of Jamaica.

His first action in re-naming the existing cabinet ministers was natural in the circumstances. A period of mourning does not fit a crucial change; in the circumstances the slightest change would be crucial. There is time and there will be time for Mr. Shearer to give himself orientation and then momentum. No one could or should ask that he take office with an instant personal programme and an instant policy.

He comes fresh and new to a vast responsibility. The country will give him time, though the circumstances of themselves may be less tolerant of delay. Certainly Mr. Shearer brings to the task grass root affinities, intimate awareness of the human, social and economic realities. His full life as a union leader can leave him in no illusions as to the country's difficulties and problems.

Union champion and fighter though he is, his severest critics have acknowledged from time to time that behind the single mindedness of the union bargainer is frequently seen the glint of understanding by a man who knows that his own case is not always the whole case. As a leader of the Jamaican nation, Mr. Shearer's problem now is the whole case for the whole people, for the whole economy and for the way of life which Jamaica wants in its democracy to enjoy.

He will need full patience as he takes hold of the many reins of office in Cabinet, in Parliament and in affairs at large. It is virtually his first term in the House — his elected membership in the previous pre-independence Parliament was back in 1955-59, and it was opposition service. There are so many things to learn, so many adjustments of strategy, tactics, and personality to be made so that Parliament functions and policy is translated to action.

Mr. Shearer has in all this some eminent, skilful and experienced colleagues whose guidance will be invaluable. Yet it should not be thought that imprisonment by good advice is always a safer course than bold adventure with honest instincts. Mr. Shearer, in his union career, has shown that he may be equalled but rarely surpassed in the

adroitness needed to have common cause yet maintain single purpose. He has also the basic equipment of human rapport, dedication to public service and determination to build the nation.

We bespeak for him in his office the fullest co-operation of his Party and of Parliament; and a tolerant but vigilant support by the whole nation. Thus as we mend our hearts in mourning, we shall set about mending the fences of our nation's affairs and then going ahead under the new Prime Minister to build a better Jamaica.

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