

SPARTACUS

SAYS

I shall never be able to prove it; but I am sure that Senator Shearer does not really think that his membership of the Cabinet is either proper or always wholly advantageous from the strictly trade union point of view. How could he think so? The man is too intelligent.

We have had the Gilbertian situation of Mr. Hugh Shearer, the Island Supervisor of the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union, making demands on Government on behalf of certain categories of Government employees. Then Senator the Hon. Hugh Shearer, Leader of Government business in the Senate, Minister without Portfolio and Jamaica's principal spokesman at the United Nations, going to meetings of the Cabinet and, behind closed doors, facing together with the rest of his colleagues, the financial facts of the life and activities of Jamaica's Government.

Then, acting on the principle of collective Cabinet responsibility, the Senator has to speak as one with his colleagues and either reject the demands of the Island Supervisor of the BITU or pare them down drastically. It would be enlightening, even if also embarrassing, to listen to what he has to say to the union delegates when he reports failure of the representations he has made to Government.

I cannot believe that Senator Shearer relishes the split personality which seems to be his daily lot as a result of his dual and frequently mutually contradictory and even mutually hostile role.

Mr. Shearer must be aware — as the rest

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of us who claim some knowledge of politics are—that in any country with a semblance of mature public opinion his membership of the Cabinet would be unthinkable. He has access to the same political literature which the rest of us read and there is no reason to believe that he is less acquainted than we are with the customs, conventions, and practices of western parliamentary democracies which he and his colleagues, including his revered leader, Sir Alexander Bustamante, never tire of telling the world are the basis on which our own Government operates.

POWER

But of course Senator Shearer wants to enjoy the best, not only of both worlds, but of all possible worlds. The influence, the prestige, the power derived from being a member of the Cabinet must be employed to reinforce his position as the active (if not the titular) head of the BITU even when there is the most manifest and embarrassing conflict of interest.

I would not like to be in Senator Shearer's shoes. His situation calls for a degree of mental acrobatics of which most of us are incapable.