

SHEARER:

1963 Political

Man of the Year

THIS PAST YEAR has been interesting for many reasons. Here at home there have been issues between the Government and the teachers, between the Government and the National Workers Union and there have been other issues, all of them making for an exciting political year.

Overseas, the happenings have been just as exciting although less publicised. Mr. Robert Lightbourne's handling of the citrus agreement with the United States has been described as masterly by those who should know. Reports are coming in from Geneva of the Jamaican representative's excellent handling of affairs connected with the GATT. And at the United Nations, the Jamaican team led by Senator Hugh Shearer have contributed greatly to the activities of that world body.

While great progress was made at home, I think that it is in the affairs of international relations in which Jamaica this year made its most significant mark. Not only did we put through a resolution through the United Nations designating 1968 as the Year of Human Rights, but in addition we established our position clearly as a member of the Western Hemisphere, rather than of the Afro-Asian bloc, and in the discussions now being held about the GATT Jamaica is becoming more and more recognized as the spokesman for the underdeveloped countries. This is a magnificent record for a new country. I cannot think of any other new country which has done half as well.

And it is for this reason that I unhesitatingly choose Senator Hugh Shearer as 1963's Political Man of the Year.

Now let us look at some of the reasons for this selection. Mr. Shearer has been the spearhead of our United Nations efforts. It is true that he had able assistance from Mr. Egerton Richardson and Mr. Probyn Marsh, the two principal permanent officers of the Jamaican Mission at the UN, but it is so true that Mr. Shearer's own personality and own persuasive qualities helped to make Jamaica's acceptance as a member of the Latin American bloc at the UN, the easy operation it has been and perhaps the most significant thing that he did was to rope in Guatemala — strongest opponent to Jamaica's membership in the Organization of American States — as a co-sponsor of the resolution on

Human Rights Year recently accepted by the United Nations. If a country bigger than Jamaica was concerned that would be considered a diplomatic triumph. It is all of that and it epitomizes the strong impression Jamaica is making everywhere in the world overseas where its representatives — whether they be civil servant or politician — are engaged in international affairs.

But Mr. Shearer is new to international politics, as new as Jamaica is new to international affairs. As a personality he is better known as a trade unionist but since last year when he took over as Leader of Government Business in the Senate he is becoming more and more to be considered as a political leader of the future. Indeed, within his own party questions are being asked. Outside his own party, eyebrows are being raised.

One of the interesting things about Mr. Shearer is that he is a distant relative of the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. The family pattern in Jamaica's politics is deeply ingrained. He did not start out as a politician. He joined the BITU's staff in 1941, after leaving St. Simon's College and soon shot up to a position second only to Mr. Lynden Newland, then General Secretary of the BITU, and soon after that moved up to a position second only to Sir Alexander Bustamante, the President of the organization. Today with the Prime Minister kept very busy with the affairs of the island, Mr. Shearer is the virtual leader of

Over the past ten years

The following have been selected Political Men of the Year over the past ten years:

- 1952: Donald Sangster
- 1953: W. A. Bustamante
- 1954: A consortium of Donald Sangster, Michael Manley, George Scott, Cleveland Walker, Theodore Williams and Robert Kirkwood.
- 1955: Donald Sangster
- 1956: Burnett Coke
- 1957: Wills O. Isaacs
- 1958: Mrs. Iris King
- 1959: John Bertram
- 1960: Wills O. Isaacs
- 1961: Edward Seaga
- 1962: Donald Sangster

the BITU and is widely regarded as one of the three foremost trade unionists that we have yet produced in Jamaica. The other two are Mr. Frank Hill and Mr. Michael Manley.

STILL, Mr. Shearer was not selected 1962's Political Man of the Year because of his trade union activities. We look therefore to his political record. He was elected to the KSAC in 1947 and served until 1951. Very few people remember that. He was elected to the House of Representatives in 1955 at the time that the People's National Party first held office and was defeated in 1959. During those days it was an open secret that Mr. Shearer did not like politics and was content to be a trade unionist. It was only with the coming of independence that Mr. Shearer began to take an interest in politics and right away the signal was flashed that what Sir Alexander Bustamante had said long ago could perhaps be true.

In the early days when Mr. Shearer was still rather young Sir Alexander Bustamante had declared him his "heir apparent" in union and party. Although he had been appointed to the Legislative Council in 1959, after his election defeat, and to counter the appointment of Mr. Thosy Kelly of the NWU, it was not until last year when Mr. Shearer, in spite of all his responsibilities elsewhere, was selected to replace Sir Neville Ashenheim as Leader of the Senate, that friends and political rivals began to understand that Hugh Shearer was a political personality to be reckoned with. When the Prime Minister, as Minister of External Affairs, ap-



pointed him to lead Jamaica's external relations at the UN, another signal was flashed and I can tell you, because I know, that many people within the Jamaican Labour Party were deeply concerned. Shearer uninterested in politics was a considerable personality to have on one's side. Shearer interested in politics was a formidable rival because for one thing he is a persuasive orator and for another he has the backing and full loyalties of the BITU.

Today, Mr. Shearer has come to be recognized as the Government's chief spokesman on foreign affairs. He does not do much of his talking in Jamaica it is true, but he has spoken with good effect and at length at the UN, in New York generally and in Port-of-Spain. As Deputy Chief of Mission at the U.N. (The Prime Minister is the Chief of Mission) Mr. Shearer has been the chairman of the Jamaican team since 1962 and as such had the distinction last year of delivering Jamaica's first speech to the General Assembly. He spoke again this year and let us look for a minute at his subjects.

In the 1962 speech he backed the Secretary-General against the Russian proposal of a Troika, called for a Nuclear Test Ban by January 1, 1963, proposed that an International Year for Human Rights should be observed in the same way that world Scientists observe the Year of the

Quiet Sun, backed the proposal for an international Trade Conference, declared Jamaica's support for the struggle against Colonialism anywhere in the world, and declared Opposition to the South African Policy of Apartheid.

And in his 1963 speech, Mr. Shearer again spoke in support of the struggle for independence in Africa, pursued his resolution on Human Rights, urged a realistic approach to the World Trade Conference in Munich in 1964, supported the call for disarmament and more trade opportunities, and committed Jamaica to the proposal for denuclearization of Latin America (and this at a time when nearby Cuba was still smarting under the American blockade which removed nuclear weapons from Cuban bases). And then in this year Mr. Shearer finalized Jamaica's membership of the Latin-American bloc of nations at the UN, and having gained Guatemala's support in the resolution on Human Rights, it now seems fairly certain that the last effective barriers have been removed to Jamaica's joining in community with the Organization of American States.

For a country so early in Independence these have been good achievements. Whatever might have been achieved at home, I think that on the record we have achieved more abroad. And Mr. Shearer has been foremost in these achievements.

He has the happy knack of doing several things at once. For instance he has been able to combine his ministerial work — he is a Minister and indeed the principal adviser of the Prime Minister — with his trade union work. I don't know how he does it but he does it. In the Senate he is urbane, but tough. In the BITU he is a shrewd bargainer. Seated with Michael Manley on the same side of the conference table, they form an unbeatable team. And in addition to all these duties and responsibilities, Mr. Shearer is a member of Joint Industrial Councils, the Pensions Authority, the Labour Advisory Council, the Sugar Industry Labour Welfare Board, the Redundancy Committee, and many other fields of public operations.

Mr. Shearer has been the first nominated member of Parliament by himself to be selected Political Man of the Year, and it is not the habit of this column to name nominated members; but I think that Mr. Shearer is more than a nominated man. He could win a seat to the House of Representatives if he tried, but in any event Sir Alexander Bustamante, who reposes an abundance of confidence in him, has made it plain that he is first among his lieutenants. And the reason is simple. Of all other sub-leaders of the JLP and BITU, Sir Alexander, who sponsored Mr. Shearer from early youth to manhood, knows that he shares his views and his attitudes over a wide range of subjects and almost unerringly interprets his intentions and objectives. That is what has made Mr. Shearer the power he is today in the politics of Jamaica.

PEOPLE have been wondering and have been asking what are Mr. Shearer's intentions. I don't know. I can only guess. It seems to me that power, responsibility and the fact of his United Nations experience, where he ranks as an ambassador, will convince him that he needs to move in those circles. We have already seen that he likes this role in his invitation to Mr. Jackie Robinson, an active campaigner for racial equality in the United States, to be the guest of the Jamaican Government. I hear too that he is negotiating for the NAACP, the big American organization for Racial Equality in the United States, to hold a convention in Jamaica, either next year or the one following, and that he is actively supporting Mr. Donald Sangster in his bid to have Latin American Directors of Central Banks to hold a convention in Jamaica next year. A man gets used to these things and he is sold. I do not think that Mr. Shearer will ever be resigned to be the unremitting trade unionist. He has now firmly embarked on the role of an international politician and granting that his party continues to win elections he will most certainly have an important part to play in the future of Jamaica.

For these and other reasons — particularly for his leadership of the Jamaican team at the United Nations this year — Mr. Shearer has earned for himself the title of 1963's Political Man of the Year.