

B/10 - Shearer, Hugh Lawson

**HUGH
LAWSON
SHEARER**

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HUGH LAWSON SHEARER



HON. HUGH LAWSON SHEARER, Jamaica's third Prime Minister since Independence was born in the village of Martha Brae just outside of Falmouth, Trelawny, on May 18, 1923. He attended the Falmouth Primary School and from there won the parish scholarship to St. Simon's College, a privately owned high school in Kingston. He graduated from St. Simon's in 1940.

This was a period of intense political and labour turmoil in Jamaica. Alexander Bustamante, the undisputed head of the labour movement and founder of the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union, and Norman Manley, head of the first organised political party in

Jamaica, the People's National Party, were both engaged in the struggle to reshape and redefine the Jamaican society in the period from 1938 to 1944.

In 1941 when Mr. Shearer was deciding what career he would follow, Alexander Bustamante had just been imprisoned for organising a waterfront strike among members of his infant labour union, the BITU.

TRAINEE JOURNALIST

Mr. Shearer who could claim distant kinship to both Bustamante and Manley was interested in journalism. He was taken on as a trainee journalist on the weekly publication the "Jamaica Worker", the newspaper of the BITU, understudying Mr. L. G. Newland who was then the paper's Editor. When Mr. Newland became General Secretary of the Union, Mr. Shearer continued working on it and eventually became the Editor.

While still Editor of the paper, Mr. Shearer began to serve his apprenticeship as a trade unionist; he accompanied Bustamante and other union officers to conferences with employers and participated in some of the most important conferences on labour disputes. Mr. Shearer got his first taste of party politics during the 1944 elections when he campaigned for the "Chief" as Bustamante was then popularly called, in the Western Kingston constituency. The Jamaica Labour Party won the elections and Mr. Shearer continued his work in the BITU.

Three years later, in 1947, Mr. Shearer was appointed Assistant General Secretary of the Union and that same year contested and won the Central St. Andrew seat on the Kingston and St. Andrew Corporation Council.

In 1948 Mr. Shearer attended a Colonial Development & Welfare Trade Union Scholarship course in Barbados.

In the 1949 General Elections Mr. Shearer contested the Western Kingston seat but was defeated by the PNP's Mr. Ken Hill.

KEY FIGURE

In Trade Union circles Mr. Shearer was becoming increasingly recognised as a key figure, sitting next to Bustamante in all important negotiations. In 1951 he was selected as one of Jamaica's labour representatives to the Moral Rearmament Conference in Switzerland and in 1953 he was appointed Island Supervisor of the Union.

In the 1955 General Elections he was elected to a seat in the House of Representatives even though the JLP lost the elections. He sat in the Opposition benches until he lost his seat in the 1959 elections.

In 1960 he was elected Vice-President of the BITU second only to Sir Alexander Bustamante who was President General.

In the 1961 referendum campaign to decide whether Jamaica should remain in the West Indies Federation or seek independence alone, the BITU under Hugh Shearer swung its weight behind the JLP's campaign for Jamaica to go it alone and the JLP gained a decisive victory.

APPOINTED TO SENATE

The JLP won the succeeding general elections and Mr. Shearer was appointed to the Legislative Council; when this was replaced by the Senate, he was made Leader of Government Business and a Minister without Portfolio. He was also appointed Deputy Chief of Mission for Jamaica at the United Nations General Assembly and figured in many crucial international issues.

In 1963, Mr. Shearer presented a proposal to the U.N. that 1968 should be designated as Human Rights Year. This proposal was accepted by the U.N. General Assembly.

Mr. Shearer was a member of the Jamaican delegation at the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' Conference in September 1966.

In the 1967 General Elections, Mr. Shearer won the Clarendon seat which had been held by Sir Alexander Bustamante before his retirement from active politics.

In the new Government, Mr. Shearer was appointed Minister of External Affairs on February 27, 1967.

On the death of Sir Donald Sangster, Mr. Shearer was chosen to be Prime Minister of Jamaica. He was sworn in on April 11, 1967.

June, 1967.

