

SIR PHILIP MANDERSON SHERLOCK, K.B.E.

The Jamaican Historical Society is very pleased to honour Sir Philip Manderson Sherlock whom it recognises as a prolific writer of history text books for Jamaica and the British Caribbean. Teacher, poet, folklorist, administrator, legislator - Sir Philip occupied between the mid-1920's and 1969 a series of responsible positions, each of which providentially prepared him for the next appointment; and with each successive appointment his influence assumed a wider scope as he passed from secondary school audiences, to the Jamaican community, to the British Caribbean community, and finally to the international community of scholars in the British, Spanish, French and Dutch Caribbean. Sir Philip has been Headmaster of Wolmer's Boys' School, Secretary of the Institute of Jamaica, Welfare Officer of the Jamaica Welfare Limited, Director of Extra Mural Studies of the University of the West Indies; Vice-Principal and Vice-Chancellor of the University of the West Indies; and more recently, Secretary of the Association of Caribbean Universities and Research Institutes.

To-night the Jamaican Historical Society leaves aside Sir Philip's illustrious appointments and concentrates on his achievements in a field, namely the writing of history for the people, which was self-imposed and not a formal requirement of any of his positions. Sir Philip belonged to that small group of pioneers who understood that the rising political consciousness of the West Indian peoples in the 1930s had to be followed and sustained by new cultural perspectives, involving a greater understanding of West Indian history and culture. He, and the late Professor John Parry, produced in 1956 the influential text book "A Short History of the West Indies" which was a decisive improvement on what was then available for students. On his own Sir Philip went on to publish "The West Indies", and "West Indian Nations: A New History". We all know, however, that there were many other books: the Junior Histories; the West Indian Folk Tales; the biography of Norman Manley. Collectively these works testify to his talent and extraordinary energy.

The Jamaican Historical Society salutes Sir Philip Sherlock as an historian who passed easily from the writing of history to the narration of it, both before live audiences and from behind the microphones of Caribbean radio stations. He has the virtue of simplicity and has made thousands of ordinary West Indians see the virtues of history. As a populariser of the West Indian past there can be few who can claim a greater beneficial impact than Sir Philip. He came to maturity in an age of clamorous political nationalism, but chose, wisely many say, to serve his islands as a generator of cultural nationalism.

The Jamaican Historical Society salutes Sir Philip Sherlock:
a great West Indian.