

In the limelight

WHEN HER HUSBAND, Hon. Sir Harold Allan, was created a Knight in 1948, one white Jamaican woman fumed at a cocktail party: "I will never address that woman as Lady, navah!" But white, brown and black Jamaican society soon had to acknowledge that it didn't take a title to make Edris Allan a lady, that being a Lady of the Realm came natural to her. She quickly emerged as a personality in her own right—a tall, stately, dark-haired woman of stunning good looks and shapely figure, at ease in Buckingham Palace or in a Jamaican worker's thatched hut. She plunged even deeper than before into social welfare activities, generously gave her time, presence and inborn leader's talents to helping Lady Molly Huggins bring Jamaican women usefully together through the Women's Federation. Whatever the physical sacrifice she had to make, she never said "no" to a request to give her "kind consent" to be roped in on a multitude of worthy social causes; often also dipped into her purse to help them. Critics poised with sharp pencils to pinpoint flaws in her public speeches, found that she knew when to speak her mind uncompromisingly, when to coo — and was always constructive. When her husband died in '53, critics and friends alike wondered: What would she do now? She merely kept on doing what she had done before as a prominent man's wife: hold her place in the frontline of leadership among the women of her country. In addition to her vice-presidency and vice-chairmanship of JWF, she is director of Jamaica Social Welfare Commission and of Mico College, committee member of the Beach Control Authority (she served on the commission out of which BCA grew), member of the panel of Juvenile Court Justices of the Peace, Patroness of Wortley Home — and the lady most likely to be found in the No. 1 spot at any number of functions throughout the country where a woman is needed to symbolize the new Jamaican society. "Not comfortable being driven," she drives her own car.



Monday Nov. 1957.