

Edwin Allen

Allen

Edwin Allen is dead

Glowing tributes from P.M., J.T.A.

Mr. Edwin Leopold Allen, former Jamaica Labour Party Member of Parliament and Minister of Education, who has been regarded for years as the 'Elder Statesman' of local politics, died yesterday morning in the University Hospital, after a long illness.

The 78-year-old politician, popularly known in his former North-West Clarendon constituency as "Teacher Allen" and throughout Jamaica, was first elected to Parliament in 1949 and although he lost twice in General Elections since then, he always came back to win again. He last won in the 1980 elections. He did not contest the December, 1983 elections because of failing health and was replaced by the current M.P., Mr. Cliff Stone.

In a tribute to the late Member yesterday, the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Edward Seaga, called him a "fearless warrior in debate" in Parliament and credited him with the "modernization of the educational system of Jamaica."

"He gave it a completely new look, and he used it as a vehicle for social change," Mr. Seaga said. The Prime Minister also said that an official funeral would be held for Mr. Allen at a date to be announced.

In another tribute, the Jamaica Teachers Association credited him with "deep and abiding commitment to education." The association said that he was moved to "persistent and untiring efforts" in bringing about improvements.

As Minister of Education, Mr. Allen was best known for his policy

paper "A New Deal in Education", which provided the basis and the framework which has shaped the country's education policy and programmes.

According to Mr. Allen, the 'New Deal' promised every child in Jamaica; "the best education that this country can afford."

He established the 70/30 ratio of primary to preparatory school Common Entrance Free Place Scholarships to favour children from poorer schools.

In 1982, he moved a motion in the House seeking to have world renowned calypso singer/actor, Harry Belafonte, declared "persona non grata" because of statements he made about the country and the Government during a speech to the Norman Manley Awards Function in Kingston that year. The motion was never debated.

Mr. Allen first became a Parliamentarian in 1950 when he won the North-West Clarendon seat for the JLP. The seat was won in the General Elections in 1949 by Mr.



O.A. Malcolm of the JLP who became the Speaker of the House. However, Mr. Malcolm was unseated as a result of a successful election petition lodged against him. A bye-election was held for the vacant seat and Mr. Allen replaced

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Mr. Malcolm was the JLP's candidate and won the bye-election.

Mr. Allen won again in 1955, but was beaten in 1959 by Mr. Malcolm who had switched to the PNP. He returned triumphantly in 1962, 1967 and 1972, before losing again in 1976 by 42 votes. He regained the seat in 1980.

Mr. Allen was Minister of Education in the JLP regimes of 1962-67 and 1967-72. He was Minister of Education and Social Welfare 1953-55 and also acted as Minister of Labour during that period. He was a member of the Legislative Council (now the Senate) from 1959-62. As senior Minister in the Government, he also headed the Cabinet on several occasions between 1962 and 1972. He was Special Adviser to the Government on Education from 1980.

Mr. Allen was born in Foxes River, Brandon Hill, St. Andrew on April 17, 1905. He was educated at Mico Training College and the London Institute of Education. He was a Mico 'Honours Man' 1927.

After school he was Head Teacher at, Mr. Felix Elementary School, St. Thomas (1928-29), Chantilly Elementary, Manchester (1929-30) and Leicesterfield School (1931-50). He received the Mico Gold Medal for distinguished service in 1975. He had been a lay preacher since 1925.

He authored several letters to the Gleaner as well as articles including: "The New Deal" 1965; a series of articles on comprehensive schools published in 1950; and, "New Look at the New Deal" a series of 20 articles published in 1979.

An Anglican he was first married to Mabel Blanche Hector in 1929, but she died in 1973. He married Edith Monica Dale in 1982 and is survived by her. He had no children.

The following statement was issued by the Prime Minister, on the Death of Mr. Edwin Allen:

"It is with great personal sadness that I received the news during a meeting in San Jose, Costa Rica, this morning of the passing of Edwin Allen. We knew he had been very ill, but we were all hoping he might recover.

"One of Jamaica's elder statesmen, and the senior member of the Jamaica Labour Party, 'Teacher', as we all called him, was both colleague and mentor. And if one had to think of a man who exemplified, in our lifetime, what it meant to be a patriotic Jamaican, it would be Teacher Allen.

"What was special about Teacher was his life-long commitment to the cause of the simple people of Jamaica, and especially to their right to a good education, which Teacher Allen always knew was the single most important requirement that the children of the poor should have the doors of learning open to them so that they could have the opportunity to reach beyond poverty to a productive and fulfilling life.

"He must truly be credited with the modernization of the educational system of Jamaica. He gave it a completely new look, and he used it as a vehicle for social change.

"He served Jamaica as a Member of Parliament for a total of 30 years making his mark from the pre-Independence period, during which he first served as Minister of Education from 1953 to 1955. It was then that he began his relentless drive to open the doors of Higher Education to the poor by introducing Secondary Education subjects into what were then called Senior Schools in Kingston as well as the rural areas. This was the first breakthrough which gave wider opportunities to those who would not otherwise have had a chance to further their education.

"But it was during his second tenure as Minister of Education — 1962-1972 — that Teacher Allen truly became worthy to be remembered as perhaps one of the greatest Ministers of Education that this country has ever had.

"His policy paper 'A New Deal in Education', which was published in December, 1966, provided the basis and the framework from which we shaped the educational policy and programmes which have underpinned Jamaica's educational planning to this day.

"His passionate advocacy at a UNESCO meeting in 1972 helped to influence the multi-lateral agencies in making available funds for the development of Education in the Third World. Under his administration was established a Planning Unit in the Ministry of Education and a National Committee to plan a new curriculum for Jamaica.

"It was during his tenure in the 1960's that Jamaica was able to develop a programme with the World Bank which led to the building of 50 Junior Secondary Schools which remains still the largest single school expansion programme Jamaica has undertaken.

"This initiative opened the door for 33,000 youngsters from our Primary Schools to get a basic Secondary education, and under his leadership, tertiary institutions — CAST, Teachers College, the Jamaica School of Agriculture — were all considerably expanded.

"There is so much that Education in Jamaica owes to Teacher Allen that the list could go on and on. He obtained funding for building the Sam Sharpe Teachers College, for upgrading Church Teachers College, for the continuing expansion of High Schools and Secondary Schools, for the establishment of the first technical teachers training programme at CAST. His work led to the development of the Educational Broadcasting Service at Caenwood, specifically to improve the quality of Primary School education; during his tenure 108 new Primary Schools were built or started.

"Edwin Allen was, indeed, a true revolutionary in the cause of Education and he acted with the rhetoric of the heart.

"In the mid-1960's he took the unprecedented, and courageous, decision — which he fearlessly upheld in the face of criticism and controversy — to weight the

availability of places for students taking the Common Entrance Examination in such a way as to allow fairer access to children from the poorer areas and from the rural schools in the High School system.

"There are many distinguished citizens of our country today, from humble backgrounds, who owe their careers and their professions to the changes Teacher Allen instituted and the doors he opened.

"There are many ways in which Teacher led and inspired those around him. His capacity for hard work was legendary; it was well-known that he would rise from 3 or 4 in the mornings and complete a day's work before 9.00 a.m.

"As a parliamentarian, he will be remembered as a fearless warrior in debate. He drew his courage from the people who elected him and he could not be swayed under pressure. All of us who sat in the House with him will remember how, whenever he was heckled, he would say: 'The people sent me here to speak for them, and I am going to speak for them'.

"And indeed he never failed to speak for the people. His courage, his humility, and his achievements will long remain an inspiration to all those who seek to serve the people of Jamaica.

"On behalf of the Government and people of Jamaica, I extend profound sympathies to Mrs. Allen and the rest of his family.

"Teacher Allen will be given an official funeral, the date of which will be announced later".

The following statement was issued on behalf of the JTA by Mrs. Pat Robinson, Secretary/Administration:

"The Jamaica Teachers' Association wishes to express regret at the passing of Mr. Edwin Allen.

"The Association recalls Mr. Allen's deep and abiding commitment to education which moved him to persistent and untiring efforts in bringing about the improvements in which he believed so deeply.

"His unshakeable stand for things which he wished to see implemented in legendary. His contribution as class teacher, Principal and policy-maker in his chosen field will be a lasting memorial to him.

"Perhaps, the quality for which Mr. Allen will best be remembered by members of the teaching profession is his recognition of the indispensable, vital and pivotal role which teachers play in the education process.

"Although as Minister of Education there were differences between the profession and Mr. Allen, the J.T.A. was always aware of the basic respect which he had for the teaching profession. This respect he demonstrated in practical ways.

"The Association extends its condolence to his family, the Jamaica Labour Party and the citizens of his former constituency which he served so devotedly".