

Cooke's appointment brings mixed feelings

THE appointment of Senate President, 75-year-old Howard Cooke of Montego Bay to become the country's third native Governor General, effective August 1, this year, has brought mixed feelings.

People of Manchester who had expected one of their own, Winston Jones, to get the nod, are disappointed, while people of St. James are either elated or indifferent.

Mr. Cooke told the *Gleaner's*

Western Bureau that he did not consider his appointment a reward for his political work, but it was due to the positive approach to his work which was being recognised by the public.

Mr. Cooke, who was born at Goodwill in St. James, noted that he grew up in a very humble home. Son of the late David and Mary Cooke, he attended elementary and private schools before furthering

his education at the Mico College and London University, pursuing a career in teaching.

In college he was described as an outstanding athlete, excelling primarily at cricket which he said was his first love.

Mr. Cooke returned to Jamaica to practice teaching at his alma mater, Mico, before leaving there to hold the position of Headmaster for the Belle Castle Boy's School in Port Antonio.

He later moved to Montego Bay and became headmaster of Barracks Road Primary School where he earned the affectionate name of "Teacher Cooke." His next move was to the life insurance industry, working with Standard Life (later absorbed by Mutual Life), then ALICO as Montego Bay's branch manager, a post he still holds.

Our Christiana correspondent filed this report yesterday afternoon:

The news that Senator Howard Cooke of Montego Bay, St. James, is to be Jamaica's next Governor General, has brought mixed reaction from residents of Manchester. In Mandeville yesterday morning, politicians and party supporters said openly that all along Mr. Winston Jones was made to believe that he would have been given the nod for the ceremonial post.

One former Member of Parliament said that the issue of Governor General meant much to Manchester and warned that what is now being seen as rejection of Mr. Jones could be reflected in the ballot boxes.

The *Gleaner* spoke to a number of persons in Mandeville who expressed the view that by not naming Mr. Jones as Governor General, the Government had broken a promise and disappointed the people of the parish who had cherished the thought of his one day occupy-

ing Kings House.

Efforts to get Mr. Jones' reaction were unsuccessful.

And from our Western Bureau came this report: While some citizens felt that Mr. Cooke's appointment to the Governor General's chair was "inevitable", others said that his appointment was "simply a ploy, as the country was moving towards a massive constitutional reform."

Custos of St. James, Hon. William Craig, said that the announcement was one that everybody had looked forward to and he was pleased that an outstanding son of the West had been appointed.

President of the Montego Bay Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mr. Ripton MacPherson, said that the members were delighted. He said that Senator Cooke's influence could enhance a better relationship between the rest of the country and the western region.

He added that Mr. Cooke's

knowledge of Parliament and Government would be beneficial to the country.

Branch Manager for Life of Jamaica, Mr. LeeRoy Clarke, said that the appointment of Mr. Cooke to the Governor General's chair was an excellent choice. He further described Senator Cooke as an outstanding politician and statesman with very good leadership qualities.

Tour operator Trevor Grant, said that he did not welcome the news as a positive one. He saw the appointment as interim to constitutional reform which could see the appointment of a President other than Mr. Cooke.

Senator Cooke, who is currently Executive Branch Manager of ALICO Jamaica, has been a life underwriter since 1982. He has served in various ministerial posts between 1972 and 1990. He would be the second President of the Senate to be appointed Governor General; Sir Clifford Campbell being the first.

B/w. Cooke, Howard