

BIN Glasspole Augustus Florizel

Jamaica's second native Governor General was born Florizel Augustus Glasspole on September 25, 1909, to a Kingston-based Methodist Minister, Theophilus Glasspole, and his wife Florence.

From these beginnings, he rose ~~to~~ fast and far to become a trade unionist, parliamentarian, Cabinet minister, and, finally, the Queen's representative in Jamaica.

Always known for a biting tongue and a fierce determination, Sir Florizel was an advocate of discipline and unity in the society, an unrepentant patron of beauty contests and fashion shows, and a lover of sports, gardening and dogs.

The boy from whom this man grew, received his early education during the years of the 1st World War, attending the Buff Bay Elementary School from 1914-1918.

In 1919, he transferred to Central Branch School and then, in 1922, became a student of the prestigious Wolmers Boys School where he successfully passed his Junior and Senior Cambridge Certificate examinations.

In 1926, with school safely behind him, the young Glasspole joined the government service, working first at the Office for Registration of Titles and then at the General Post Office.

Spare time was filled with accountancy studies, membership of Coke Church and Young Men's Club, debating contests and participation in the radical Jamaica Reform Association.

In 1930 Florizel Glasspole went to work in St Thomas, as an Accounting Clerk at the Serge Island Sugar Estate.

It was here, surrounded by low-paid canefield workers, that he is said to have received inspiration for the work which was to be his chief preoccupation over the next ~~x~~ 25 years.

Returning to Kingston late in 1930, Mr Glasspole joined with late Barrister E.E.A.Campbell and the late Earnest Rae - a former Mayor of Kingston - to form the Clerks Union which won a 45-hour work week for shop assistants throughout Jamaica.

Mr Glasspole became General Secretary of the Clerks Union, and went on to organize the Water Commission Manual Workers Association, the Mental Hospital worker's Union and several other workers organization before and after becoming a full-time unionist in 1943.

1946 saw Glasspole boarding ship for Britain, to take up studies at Rusking College, Oxford. He went on a scholarship awarded him by the British Trades Union Congress (TUC) in 1939 but shelved for several years due to the outbreak of World War II.

In Britain, the Jamaican Trade Unionist toured union offices, and the offices of the British Labour Party and the Houses of Parliament, and became familiar with union and Labour Party officials.

By this stage, Florizel Glasspole had added the title of Member of Parliament to his trade union status, having been elected to the East Kingston and Port Royal constituency on a Peoples National Party (PNP) ticket at the first general elections under Universal Adult Suffrage in 1944.

It was a seat he was to hold for nearly 29 years, winning successively in 1949, 1955, 1959, 1962, 1967 and 1972.

The first ten years after Adult Suffrage was introduced saw the PNP in Opposition, while the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) government of Alexander Bustamante formed the administration.

But those Opposition years were useful years for Florizel Glasspole who was elected 1st Secretary of the PNP Parliamentary Group - a post he held until 1973 - as well as serving as an ex-officio member of the Kingston and St Andrew Corporation (KSAC) and pursuing his union work.

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Inside the House of Representatives, Glasspole attacked the Government with what one newspaper columnist described as a "deadly torturing tongue".

Outside of ~~Kaxkaxaxax~~ the Legislature, he pursued his union ~~as~~ activities and became General Secretary of the ^(local) Trades Union Congress until it ~~split~~ split, after which he busied himself with the work of the PNP-affiliated National Worker's Union (NWU).

His role as General Secretary of the NWU came to an end in 1955, when the PNP won the general elections, and Glasspole was named Minister of Labour.

For two years he tackled labour problems, helping to revitalize the then lagging Farm work Programme with the United States, and dealing with the very unions he had helped create.

In 1957, in a Cabinet reshuffle, Mr Glasspole was named Minister of Education, replacing Dr Ivan Lloyd who moved to the ~~Minister of~~ Ministry of Home Affairs.

Mr Glasspole came to the education portfolio under the PNP theme of Education for all, Equality ~~and~~ of Opportunity for all. He was instrumental in expanding secondary school accomodation, increasing the number of technical schools from one to six, and helping to make the free place system successful. *[It was also under his ministership that the present Ministry of Education was constructed - a building arch-foe Edwin Allen dubbed The Glasspole]* ~~He~~ held this position - as well as that of Leader of Government Business - until 1962 when the Jamaican people chose ^(The JLP to lead them into) independence ~~and~~

rejecting federation with the other English speaking Caribbean states, ~~and the JLP won the right to lead the country into independence.~~

Glasspole had been a member of the Standing Committee on the West Indies Federation, and also of the House of Representatives Committee which prepared Jamaica's Constitution and finalized it in Britain.

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The PNP went back into Opposition and Florizel Glasspole went with it, and from that position helped prepare the Standing Orders which went into effect in Parliament in 1965.

Jamaica's preference for ten year political terms ran true to form and it was not until 1972 that the PNP again took the reigns of government amid great popular acclaim.

Once again, Florizel Glasspole was given charge of education, but he scarcely had time to do more than present a policy statement on 'the Educational Thrust of the ~~the~~ '70's' before he was ~~thrust~~ thrust himself into an even more challenging role.

Amid great speculation, which had been present since Sir Clifford Campbell ~~was~~ retired as Queen's representative in March, Prime Minister Michael Manley announced on Labour Day 1973 that Florizel Glasspole would be Jamaica's new Governor General.

It was a popular choice, and Glasspole was acclaimed as a 'pillar of intergity' despite 34 years in partisan politics.

In his announcement, ^{(described him as Dean of the Labour Movement} Prime Minister Manley ^{said the choice of} Labour Day was significant because of Glasspole's trade union background

~~Jamaica's new Governor General the third since independence was appointed during June 1973, by the late Justice Herbert Duffus who had acted in the post since Manley.~~

^{in June, Mr Manley}
~~And in a Parliamentary tribute~~ ^{in June, Mr Manley} spoke of Mr Glasspole's qualities of tenacity, love, conscientiousness and organization, as well as his ability to do careful and detailed work.

He said Mr Glasspole had shown a deep inner commitment to the relationship of the rule of law and the democratic process by which the rule of law was maintained.

Answering this and other tributes in his last visit to Parliament as a member, Mr Glasspole said he loved that institution and the cut and thrust of debate there.

He urged the younger generation, and particularly younger members of the House to understand their great responsibilities for the preservation of the two-party system and parliamentary democracy.

Mr Glasspole also ^(said that) ~~urged~~ people outside of Parliament ~~to~~ must not be led to feel that the cut and thrust of debate in the House should be reproduced in fighting outside.

"This land is ours, the people are ours. Success or failure means everything to the ~~people~~ people" he said.

Soon afterwards, at age 64, Florizel Glasspole was sworn in as Jamaica's third Governor General by Chief Justice Herbert Duffus, who had acted in the post since Sir Clifford Campbell retired in March.

In his speech at the swearing in, Prime Minister Manley commended to Mr Glasspole the example of Sir Clifford who, he said, had shown the symbolic importance of the ~~post~~ Governor General, "where the holder of this post embodies within him the hopes and the ideals of the nation and carries within him the respect and affection of all the people regardless of political affiliation or economic status".

But there were also differences evident between the two native holders of the post - chiefly the lack of ceremonial uniform and the traditional 'Sir' .

Parliament had decided that the traditional knighting of Governor ~~General~~ Generals should be discontinued in favour of a new national honour, the Order of the Nation, and that jacket and tie should be worn except on rare occasions when a Jamaican military uniform would be adopted.

It was in this national spirit that Mr Glasspole took office, with a call for rededication to the Jamaican motto 'Out of Many, one people', and the urging "to set our faces strongly against ~~the~~ any attempt to disrupt the unity among our people."

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Asked later about the three month gap between the retirement of Sir Clifford and his own swearing in, Mr Glasspole said he had asked for that period in order to discuss the matter with his wife and make up his mind.

"I'd been involved for almost 30 years in the rough and tumble and cut-and-thrust of politics ^{he said} "I knew that taking this job would demand a new discipline of me, a new approach. But if I say so myself, I've always been a disciplined person - so I accepted the Prime Minister's offer."

Mr Glasspole also noted that the job was not just making speeches - most of which he wrote himself - but also ^{involved} desk work including minutes from the Public Service, Police Service and Judicial Service Commissions Cabinet papers, the Privy council and organizations for which he is Patron.

Such organizations include the Boy Scouts, the Order of St Johns, and several uniformed youth organizations.

Speaking to these and other organizations over the years, Mr Glasspole hit out against indiscipline in the society, and put forth a call for unity.

But the mid- and later 1970's saw the 'GG' ^{himself} becoming a subject for speeches by the major political groupings.

As early as 1975, the Youth Arm of the ruling People's National Party called for his removal for what it called virulent attacks on the Government and people of Jamaica, and this was to be followed five years later ^(with) a ~~verbal~~ ^{verbal} ~~attack~~ ^(on his integrity) attack by PNP General Secretary D.K.Duncan.

The Governor General's integrity now became a subject frequently expounded by the Jamaica Labour ~~Party~~ Party, more so ~~as~~ with the approach of the 1980 general elections which brought them back into power.

With the ascendancy of the JLP, the question of Jamaicans receiving foreign honours reared its head again, and Prime Minister Edward Seaga announced that Jamaicans were eligible in as much as the Jamaican system of honours had not gained sufficient prestige to be able to command its own distinction.
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By Easter 1981, Florizel Glasspole had been awarded the Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St Michael and St George (GCMG), in addition to his previously held national honours - Order of the Nation, and Commander of the Order of Distinction - and the Venezuelan Order of Andres Bello (1st Class) and Order of Liberty.

The knighthood seemed to increase the distance between Sir Florizel and his former party, and the PNP did not join in Parliamentary congratulations to the Governor General.

Party officials said Florizel Glasspole was one of those who had earlier supported the ~~replacement~~ institution of national honours in place of the old monarchical awards, and ~~noted~~^{pointed out} that so noted a person as PNP founder and National Hero Norman Manley had turned down the knighthood.

The British honour set the mark of tradition on the second Jamaica family to occupy Kings House.

The family ~~was~~ a small one - ~~Sir~~ Florizel Glasspole married Ina Josephine Finlocke in 1934, a union which produced one daughter, Sara Lo

Josephine Finlocke attended Coke Church as did her future husband, but neither was aware of the other until they were introduced by her sister in Annotto Bay.

"We were introduced and it has been a hot thing ever since" Mrs Glasspole said some years ago.

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Mr. Glasspole, like so many of our veteran politicians began his political career in 1938, when the riots, hunger marches and general political upheaval of the time awoke in him a sense of social justice, and drew him from a reasonably comfortable job at S.A. Shoucair Ltd., (where he was an Accountant), to join in the Labour movement.

At this time he was active in the formation of shop assistants into Jamaica's first trades union. He then became Secretary of the Jamaica United Clerks Association with a membership of 2,000.

He was strongly attracted to the philosophy and politics of Norman Manley, who immediately after the bloody working class upheaval of 1938 declared that Jamaica was in dire need of a Labour Party. His attraction for Manley later deepened into a personal loyalty. But his political activities start in 1939, when he is active as a trade unionist, and as a member of Manley's P.N.P.; In 1939, he is often seen and heard on the P.N.P. political platform. He gave strong support along with the City Clerks to the "fighting Barrister" - Mr. E.E.A. Campbell, who sat for the Legislative Council that year, and won over his opponent Mr. Evans. In fact a measure of Mr. Glasspole's importance at this time, is seen when Mr. Evans in a letter to the "Gleaner" in 1939, in January, singles out Mr. ^{Glasspole} ~~Campbell~~ for special criticism, and accuses him of not "playing cricket" as befitted an old boy of Wolmers.

Mr. Glasspole, then, was a foundation member of the P.N.P. and as such committed himself to the movement for self-government, which at that time amounted to treason against the state. This was the decree of Sir Arthur Richards, Governor of Jamaica in 1939.

Yet this same committment to ~~the~~ Politics, and to the cause of Labour, and his activities in trade unionism, proved fortuitous for his career,

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for they brought him to the direct notice of the members of the Royal Commission - The Moyne Commission) which investigated social and political conditions in the West Indies as a result of the 1938 disturbances. The Labour M.P.'s of the British Parliament, were particularly impressed with Florizel Glasspole: His intelligence and inherent qualities of leadership therefore won him one year of study at Ruskin College - the Workingman's Institute at Oxford University.

Florizel Glasspole showed the benefits of this study, for he became "an adroit, non-bitter trades union executive", in the words of 'Spotlight'. Opinion holds that Big Business ~~is~~ liked him, although as founder or secretary of President of innumerable trade unions, the reverse could very well have been the case.

He was considered a "shrewd and cogent negotiator" on behalf of Labour," and his efficiency commanded a great deal of confidence: This confidence is shown when in the troubled political years of World War 2, Glasspole was called to various Boards, whose very names tell of the labour problems of the time. These Boards were - Government Workmen's Compensation Law Revision Committee: Middleclass Unemployment Committee: Wages Board: Apprenticeship Committee: and Minimum Wage for Baking, Printing, Dry Goods Board. Glasspole was also Jamaica correspondent to the British T.U.C. upon whose advice and sometimes financial aid, the working class movement leaned heavily in the years of long struggle - political, social and economic.

So dedicated was this Union man that he gave up his job at 'Shoucair's" in order to properly do trade union work. He could hardly subsist on the small fees ~~now~~ paid him by the unions. His wife, Ina Kinlocke turned to dressmaking in order to eke ~~me~~ out a ~~iv~~ living.

His reward for such hard work came in 1944, when in the first election held under Universal Adult Suffrage, he was one of the four successful P.N.P candidates in the 32 member house. He became Parliamentary Secretary to the tiny opposition, led then by Dr. Ivan Lloyd. His popularity with the electorate showed again in