

OPPOSITION IN EXILE

MICHAEL MANLEY STUMPS IN CANADA

How does a former Prime Minister support himself while leading an opposition party which no longer holds a seat in Parliament? For Jamaica's Michael Manley, part of the answer has been to head north to the university lecture circuit. The pay is good, the travel exciting and the audiences more receptive than most of the voters at home.

This year, as the long Canadian winter slowly relaxed its grip, Manley staged a campus tour that took him from Ontario to British Columbia. Beginning at the University of Western Ontario, Manley hammered out the familiar themes that were the public signature both of his 1972-80 rule in Jamaica and of his broader reputation as an advocate of international economic reform.

"There is a basic difference," he told an overflow Saturday night crowd, "between a strategy of independence and a strategy of neocolonialism. In a strategy of independence, you maximise your resources and productive capacity, and develop your autonomy and self-reliance. In a strategy of neocolonialism, you say you are too small to stand alone, and therefore need to align yourself with a metropolitan power and serve its interests. I stand unapologetically for independence. My successor in Jamaica stands unapologetically for neocolonialism."

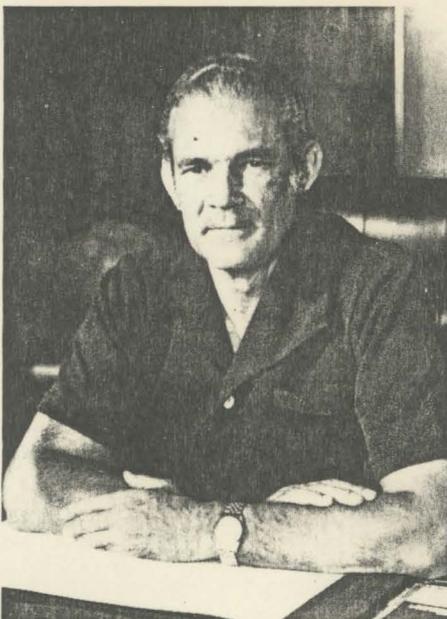
Referring to Nicaragua as well as Grenada, Manley claimed that "politics follows economics." The Monroe Doctrine was propagated initially not to establish American political hegemony over the hemisphere, but to protect what were termed "pecuniary interests" by John Quincy Adams, then Secretary of State and architect of the policy. The "Yankee trader" was rising to prominence in the early 19th century, and it was deemed essential for the US to safeguard international markets and investments.

Faced with metropolitan and especially US economic imperialism, Third World countries, insisted Manley, must learn to cooperate economically with each other. But whenever they take steps in this direction, their energies, he suggested, are invariably diverted by national crises. In the West Indies, the answer still lies in Federation — "an idea that failed because it was ahead of its time." He added enthusiastically, "I remain an unrepentant federationist."

As at other Canadian campuses on the tour, Manley's audience at the University of Western Ontario included Canadian and West Indian students, professors, and a high number of Caribbean immigrants, mostly Jamaicans and staunch supporters of Manley's People's National Party (PNP). Many journeyed more than a hundred miles to hear the talk. Manley skilfully sensed the mix and mood of the crowd, directing remarks to each segment of it.

He wooed Canadian support by comparing Canada's position with that of the West Indies. "To develop independence strategies in the face of your mighty neighbour to the south is surely one of the major challenges to statecraft in Canada," he said to hearty applause.

Frank E Manning has been on the North American lecture circuit with Jamaica's opposition leader Michael Manley.



Michael Manley: "reliance on the IMF was the biggest mistake of my life"

Fortunately, he added, Canada has gained from its relatively greater experience. Compared with Caribbean countries, "You have a far more mature understanding of these matters internationally."

Manley further appealed to the Canadian tradition of moral rather than military leadership. "To the extent that you can develop a genuine strategy of First World-Third World cooperation," he exhorted, "you will have guaranteed your security in a way that no army ever can."

Manley's flamboyant rhetorical skills were best demonstrated in political remarks aimed primarily at his West Indian supporters. Commenting on Grenada, he began by describing Eric Gairy as "an instinctive non-rationalist member of the neocolonial movement." He then outlined the Gairy regime, alternating dramatically between pathos and humour. Then he talked more indicatively about the Bishop government, endorsing it for economic efficiency and successful social programmes, and contending that there was a genuine commitment to non-alignment until the US began threatening intervention and using Cuban aid as a "self-fulfilling prophecy" about Communist influence.

After the assassination of Bishop, claimed Manley, the military government was willing to negotiate with neighbouring countries. If that course had been followed, Grenada could have been "rescued." Instead, because of the US-led invasion, "Generations of Grenadians will be left with the thought that what happened was their fault, and that they were unable to solve it on their own."

The success of Manley's Canadian campus

tour inspired an encore later in the spring. He has also been joined by other West Indian critics of the Grenada invasion and related political trends. One of these is Don Rojas, Maurice Bishop's press secretary, who is now living in Canada and seeking ministerial permission to remain. Rojas has given a number of talks to university and community groups, and has become a familiar figure on the television talk show circuit.

More recently Rickey Singh, the controversial former editor of *Caribbean Contact*, launched a four-week speaking tour in Canada sponsored by the Canadian Council of Churches. Singh, whose work permit was abruptly revoked by the Barbados government last autumn after he severely criticised the invasion of Grenada, has warned Canadian audiences about the US military build-up in the Eastern Caribbean and its continuing dominance of Grenada. He has also acknowledged, however, that the Grenadian public feel a deep sense of "betrayal and trauma" over the assassination of Bishop, and are in no mood to tolerate further revolutionary activity.

But Manley remains the star of the travelling Canadian show, thanks to his superior platform skills and to the wide international publicity that he attracted during his eight years as Jamaica's Prime Minister. Speaking of that period in his first campus talk, Manley acknowledged that his indebtedness to the IMF — which he charged with "adjusting" rather than "developing" Third World economies — was "the biggest mistake of my life." He further insisted that Seaga's "neocolonialist" strategy was doomed to failure, and was already faltering badly. The PNP would be ready to fight an election as soon as voters' lists were updated and provisions made for a realistic campaign. "You can't lose this time, boss," yelled one rabid supporter.

At a reception following the speech, Manley talked about his current role as leader of a non-parliamentary opposition. The job of mobilising public opinion, he said, was facilitated by the PNP's tradition of social criticism and political education. Unlike most other Caribbean parties which have functioned exclusively "within a populist matrix," the PNP, he said, has promoted serious ideological debate. He claimed that a recent poll showed that only 53 per cent of the Jamaican electorate supported the invasion of Grenada, compared with upwards of 80 per cent throughout the Eastern Caribbean. This, he said, shows that the PNP's impact has not been erased by the Seaga Government.

Manley's current task in Jamaica is to translate generalised sentiment into electoral support. But he also needs to earn a living, and to maintain his position as a spokesman for non-alignment and a new international economic order. The means of realising that agenda lie, ironically, in the metropolis, where students, intellectuals, and Caribbean emigres are an eager and paying audience for a Third World celebrity. ■