

MARLEY STATUE UNVEILED

CROWD LIKES NEW LOOK

A LOUD ROAR of approval went up at Celebrity Park in the National Stadium last night as the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. Edward Seaga, unveiled the new statue of reggae superstar, the Hon. Robert Nesta Marley O.M., before a huge crowd.

The unveiling of the huge bronze monument of Jamaica's most famous performer fittingly opened the World Youth Festival of Arts (WYFA), which is being staged in Kingston in tandem with the International Youth Conference (IYC), and which are being attended by thousands of youths from all parts of the globe.

The new statue shows Bob in his typical stage stance: guitar in hand, his right hand limply resting on the base of the guitar, while his left search the frets; dressed in jeans and a tall sleeved-shirt with the sleeves rolled half-way up his hand and his tall elegant locks flowing down to his back.

The first statue which was commissioned by the Jamaican Government in 1981, shortly after Bob died of cancer, was rejected by the public when it was unveiled in 1983 — as not being a true image of the late singer. Many thought that the sculptor, Christopher Gonzales, had put more of his own concept of Bob into the work than seeking to create a true, physical image of him.

Not so with the new statue done by 82-year-old Alvin Marriott, Jamaica's leading sculptor for many years, whose bony fingers trembled under the assault of last night's cold, rainy weather as the chairman of the function, the Hon. Hector Wynter O.J., Chairman of the National Heritage Trust Commission, led the crowd in giving him three loud cheers for his lovable work.

The Prime Minister, in a moving address, said that the life and achievements of the late singer had a special message for Jamaica today: "The message is that we can take what seems to be great difficulties, severe handicaps, adverse conditions, and make them into ladders — into steps-up which we may climb from despair to victory".

As Mr. Seaga reached to pull the string to unveil the statue, there were murmurs of: "Ah hope it look good, you know"; and, "Ah hope it not like the first one".

Then when he pulled the string and the bronze beauty was revealed, a deafening roar shattered the suspense-filled silence. There were shouts of: "Yes; that is Marley"; "Yes, Bob, a you this: this perfect", in reference to Marley; and, "Yes, old boy; you know you work", in reference to Mr. Marriott.

Archbishop Abuna Yesehag, of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, immediately blessed the statue as the floodlights flickered on it; and, then, as if in proud display of appreciation, Ziggy Marley, oldest son of Bob and Rita Marley, sang several lines of the inimitable "Redemption Song" in Bob's own style under the piercing glance of his father's stony eyes. When he ended the crowd shouted for more.

Even Bob's mother, Mrs. Cedella Booker, a Rastafarian, who claimed that "Rastas do not worship statues or graven images", described the occasion as "a wonderful moment"

and a "day we will always remember". She expressed her appreciation of the statue and said that it was necessary to "remember him as he was".

The function started shortly after the 6 p.m. scheduled starting time, with Mr. Wynter welcoming the crowd and singling out the Urban Development Corporation, Stresscon Limited, who lent a crane free to set up statue; and the Jamaica Defence Force, as well as Mrs. Rita Marley, Bob's widow, for their contribution to the success of the effort.

A drizzle immediately descended on the audience, but this was short-lived as a heavy north-easterly wind blew away the dark clouds and cooled the evening temperatures.

Prime Minister Seaga said: "Bob Marley would not ask us to come here today just to shower praises on him, or to be entertained; but to realise through his example that a poor start in life does not have to be a barrier to achievement; that greatness can lie hidden in what might

appear to be circumstances that would make greatness impossible, and if we take our God-given talents and work hard with them, we can reach great heights of achievement, no matter where we start from".

He gave a lengthy history of Bob's life, starting from his birth in St. Ann, to his collapse in Central Park, New York, in September 1980: "Having given away his strength and the energies of his great talent to people".

"But over and above the message in song and music, the life of the man says something special to us in Jamaica, the land where he was born. This country has never been an easy one to live in for most of its people; but present difficulties often seem to be the worst ones, and we tend to believe that our great grand-fathers were living in some golden era.

"The advantage we have today over our ancestors of yesterday is that we are coming into the full realization of our Jamaican citizenship. We are no longer the subjects of another power or piece of an empire, but the upholders of a nation — our nation. What we do is what we get".

He said that the real benefit to Jamaica from Bob Marley's life was the re-awakening of the realization that we need not be trapped by circumstances, environment, birth or fate.

"No matter how great the difficulties, how complex the problems, how gloomy the picture, or how

(Cont't on Page 3)

(Cont'd from Page 1)

much it might seem that we are caught with no way out, yet the spirit will always find a way.

"Handicaps, difficulties and adverse conditions can be transformed into ladders, into steps, by which we may ascend from the pit of apparently desperate circumstances on to the heights of achievement. Neither poverty nor lack of any kind can be a barrier to the determined spirit which makes full use of its God-given talents. That was the supreme message of Bob Marley," Mr. Seaga said.

He publicly congratulated Mr. Marriott on his handiwork, and paid

tribute to the assistance of the Marley Foundation and Island Records.

Several members of the Marley family including his widow, Mrs. Marley, his sons, Ziggy, Stephen and Damion; and his sister, Pearly Livingston, attended the function.

So did several Ministers, including the Hon. Errol Anderson, Minister of the Public Service, who is in charge of the preparations for the IYC. He was accompanied by his wife. Also on attendance were Senator Olivia Grange, Executive Director of the WYFA; and Mr. Neville Garrick, researcher and consultant to the Marley statue project.

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Dowie photo:

RILEY'S STATUE UNVEILED:The new statue of the late reggae superstar, the Rt. Hon. Robert Nesta Marley O.M., crowns the scene as the Prime Minister, the Rt. Edward Seaga, left, pulled the cord to unveil the monument. Also looking on from left are: the Archbishop of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, His Beatitude Abuna Yesehaq, Senator Olivia Grange, Executive Director of the World Youth Festival of Arts (WYFA), Mr. Neville Garrick, partly hidden, researcher for the project and the Hon. Errol Anderson, hands behind back, Minister of the Public Service, who is in charge of the preparations for the National Youth Conference (IYC).