

NOEL NEWTON NETHERSOLE

A Short Study by James Carnegie

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Noel Newton Nethersole, Minister of Finance and second Minister in the Jamaican Government from 1955 to the time of his death in 1959, undoubtedly would have regarded the new structure to house the Bank of Jamaica and other financial institutions as a realization of a dream. But it would also probably have meant much more than that to him. For the new Bank of Jamaica building, the new Bank of Nova Scotia building and the others we see around us in the Kingston re-development area, largely due to the activities of the Urban Development Corporation are part of the results of the work of Noel Nethersole himself. This refers not just to his inspirational work behind the setting up of the Bank of Jamaica but, as we shall see, he was very largely instrumental in the setting up of independent, public corporations of the type which have helped to make this true reconstruction of Kingston possible.

Although Nethersole was not an architect in the physical, artistic or engineering sense, the words of Sir Christopher Wren about looking around the monument for the man would apply here. For although Nethersole did not live to see the Bank of Jamaica come into existence, it would not have been possible without him. It is also unlikely that the Bank would have reached its present position physically and materially at the end of the third quarter of the century without his work and perception. The building and the statue probably represent the beginnings of the redress of history as far as Noel Nethersole is concerned, and the comparative neglect of the last decade and a half may be removed finally when John Maxwell in due course publishes his biography.

In an article published in the *Daily Gleaner* shortly after his death, Nethersole was called "... the preceptor of planning for a Central Bank...most beloved politician of all parties and sectors that modern Jamaica has known, he was a most unusual person. 'Enfant terrible', Nethersole was a mystery to many: How could a man who never had been able to husband his own resources be of value to financial leadership of a country? How could a man who obviously had never disciplined himself at work even at Oxford subject himself to the rigours of ministerial duties? How could a man of such sybaritic habits show the constancy and judgement necessary for national and international negotiation?" Nethersole, in the words of the *Gleaner* writer, "persevered to prove himself one of the finest Ministers of Government that the country has produced, a national leader of bedrock stability, a cementing force."

Nethersole was not in his life, nor is he now regarded as having the colossal status of Norman Manley, National Hero and great advocate who was his friend, party leader and Premier. But Manley's stature should not obscure the fact that Nethersole was a most unusual man indeed, and ended his life with more of an apparent grasp of technocracy than Manley himself.

Similarities

In the early years, there were some similarities between these two unusual men - similarities which remained to the end. They both went to Jamaica College where a plaque was erected in honour of Nethersole long before a portrait of Manley was hung in a place of honour in the school. Both were also Rhodes scholars in days when these awards were just not normally given to men of a certain complexion. But Manley's stature was such that he could not be refused this award. Almost a decade later, when the same rules applied, Nethersole was also given the award.

There were, of course, differences of personality. Manley, the mercurial, was a superb runner, while Nethersole, the placid and tenacious, called "Crab", had excelled at the reflective game of cricket. Both turned to law after their studies at Oxford - Manley to the glories of the bar, Nethersole to the comparative quiet of a solicitor's chambers. Their political roles were also contrasting - Manley, the hero of the hustings and lion of parliament. Nethersole the planner, conciliator and political economist. Nethersole, although perhaps an 'enfant terrible' as claimed by the *Gleaner* writer was not a mystery. His father, J.M. Nethersole, had had a most unusual career in the island's public service for one who was not white. He had reached positions of Administrator General and Trustee in Bankruptcy - public positions as high as any Jamaican attained in the modified Crown Colony era, with the exception of Sir Henry Brown who reached the High Court Bench. J.M. Nethersole also spread his talents outside the service. After the 1907 earthquake, he was chairman of the Policy Holders Committee that played a vital role in re-building the city of Kingston. He served (as his son was later to do) on the Jamaica Cricket Board and was church warden at St. George's Church, having such status that a House at Kingston College, founded by the Anglican Church in the 1920s was named after him.

Young Nethersole might not have disciplined himself in work at Lincoln College as the *Gleaner* writer claimed, but R. Leach, who had been there with him, testified that he had been a leader, while a distinguished English scholar, Professor H. J. Banbury, gave

him the ultimate Establishment tribute in the columns of the London *Times* when he said that Nethersole had deserved "... a far more complete notice than he had received ... I can recall few men who had so quickly attained universal popularity. He was a law student at Oxford, but dispensed his energy among many avocations."

When he returned home Nethersole, true to character, did not confine his activities within the bounds of his legal practice. His professional colleagues had differing opinions of him. Hugh A. Levy, who had been articled to him, thought that he was uninterested in money, but also said that "in his practice as a solicitor he displayed a degree of erudition and astuteness equalled only by his application and patience. His patience and tolerance were indeed monumental."

A.C.V. Graham, a country lawyer and judge, said on the other hand, "He never had a big practice because he sacrificed himself in service for his country." Both judgements were undoubtedly valid and not quite the same as saying that this was a man who could not "husband his resources" as the *Gleaner* writer claimed. The truth probably was that he was, in fact, preparing himself for public life.

Early Roles

One of the earliest important political roles had been as Chairman of the Finance Committee of the Kingston & St. Andrew Corporation, a post which must have given him ideas. This was confirmed by Vernon Arnett who succeeded him both in his constituency and as Minister of Finance. Arnett pointed out that "Nethersole had read widely in economics and finance. I know he had read Strachey and Laski and other socialist writers and also Maynard Keynes (a capitalist)."

Manley made his reputation at the bar not long after returning from England and was famous and respected long before he turned to public life. Nethersole was also respected but for different reasons - for playing cricket and for administration. Nethersole earned a particular regard in those areas both because of his personality and perhaps because he was a Rhodes scholar, and this of proven mental capacity.

In this area, the leadership abilities that he had shown at Lincoln College were quickly harnessed. He played cricket for his club and was captain of the Jamaican team in five seasons - 1932, 1935, 1936, 1938 and 1939 - although he did not play in the last season. Nethersole was thus one of the pioneers of a tradition in the West Indies where men like H.B.G. Austin and Frank Worrel in Barbados and Trinidad and Jeffery Stollmeyer in Trinidad, all went on to distinction in public or political life. They were all much better cricketers than Nethersole. He, however, saved his real distinction for his later life.

As a player Nethersole was never West Indian standard. He may have been too "nice" to excel at the highest level, as implied by the columnist G. St. C. Scotter, once sports editor of the *Gleaner*, who observed after speaking about Nethersole's exceptional grasp of the financial affairs of the country that "it may well have been his experiences on the cricket field that made him such a friendly personality in the field of politics, all too often distinguished in Jamaica by the opposite of friendliness."

The burden of this piece is not primarily concerned with Nethersole as a sportsman, except insofar as these activities led to his public political life, but a few other things should be mentioned. These would include the fact that he once held the 9th wicket record of 69 runs with F.R. Martin, who was to go on to score a century in a Test match for the West Indies against Australia. This was Crab indeed. He became a life member of the Jamaica Cricket Board in 1955, after 20 years of continuous service, and he also had 16 years continuous service as a member of the West Indian Cricket Board, serving also as a selector.

He is widely credited for being the man responsible for pushing the selection of Ramadhin and Valentine, two raw young players, for the English tour in 1950, although their bowling in trials had not been that impressive. They went on to become, almost immediately, two of the greatest spin bowlers in the history of the game. This report, if accurate, would suggest the kind of judgement, patience and persuasion that was to lead to convince the Colonial Office not to stand in the way of a Central Bank for Jamaica.

It seems true to say that Nethersole shone as a team man both in cricket and politics, and also certainly the respect, popularity and experience he gained on the cricket field and in the Committee rooms, made him an obvious choice to lead the National Reform Association in 1937. The "sybaritic habits" then, may not have been entirely such, and the "constancy and judgement necessary for national and international negotiation" may well have been sharpened by the arguments and the efforts to avoid pitfalls of insularity in selection in the board room of the West Indian Cricket Board of Control.

Change

In any event, however shaped, Nethersole was ready in the late 1930s. This readiness was to be a sign of good judgement, even if he had accomplished nothing else. It was a time when the whole structure of the society was changing, when men like J.A.G. Smith and D.T. Wint, who had been outstanding legislators from their parishes under the limited electoral system, were losing their grips on the public, and someone like H.G. DeLisser appeared to be retreating within the old Establishment, although he remained as editor of the *Gleaner* for some time.

The popular oral version of our history has it that these leaders sprang up almost self-propelled, whereas the truth is that the groundwork was very often laid by relatively obscure men who called interested men of eminence to head their groups because of their image and their respectability. Both Manley and Nethersole were in this group. The best example of this was that Smith as well as Manley, was considered when the leadership of the People's National Party was being discussed by the "Young Turks" of the era.

One of these "Young Turks" was Ken Hill who had already made a name for himself as a journalist with the *Gleaner* even before *Public Opinion* was founded in 1937. In that same year, Hill was ready to move from words and criticism to deeds and activism. One result of this was the formation of the National Reform Association whose President was Noel Nethersole. This selection was doubtably due to Nethersole's professional position, and even more so perhaps, to the prominence he had attained in the cricketing world, which had attained a special place in Jamaica due to the wonderful exploits of the great George Headley.

It is particularly interesting to note the assessments of Nethersole at this time in his life, since later on his background was almost taken for granted. Senator Allan Byfield, a man who emerged himself from a certain "roots" to educational and political prominence, and who was thus particularly qualified to make such a judgement, said that Nethersole "was regarded in public life as a man who though *born in the upper class of his country* (author's stress) became a friend of all and, in fact, champion of the cause of the under-privileged." One scholar of the period also described him as "having a surprising background for one with his views." This writer also saw him as "giving respectability to radicalism by his views." The National Reform Association was but the crossing of the Rubicon for Nethersole, if a man with his temperament was capable of worrying about personal risks. The Reform Association went on to prepare the way for the People's National Party by affiliating itself with the Jamaica Progressive League in which W.A. Domingo, who was to be regarded by Governor Richards as a really dangerous radical, had great influence. Nethersole has thus been judged as "one who gave stimulus to the 1938 movement" and "as contributing towards the dissolution of rigid class distinctions between the lower and middle classes, if only temporarily". It was only logical then, that he was almost to guarantee a large place for himself in the history of 20th century Jamaica, by becoming the first Vice-President and Deputy Leader of the P.N.P.

After startling political beginnings, it was to be almost 20 years before he was to gain office and to "subject himself to the rigours of ministerial duties". Although even in 1938, the thought of a Jamaican Minister of Finance replacing the Colonial Secretaries who performed that type of function would not have been seriously considered by most Jamaicans, Nethersole was gaining valuable experience.

He was to have an apprenticeship in the Kingston & St. Andrew Corporation, where many of the new stalwarts of the era, from Bustamante on, were to serve. He pioneered as a candidate for the P.N.P and was soon Chairman of the Finance Committee. The Corporation had had individuals like Marcus Garvey and H.A.L. Simpson in its past, and Bustamante was to be part of their tradition, but someone like Nethersole also learned something. Conciliation and some kind of Parliamentary training were chief among these, and they were to serve him in good stead when he finally came into the larger sphere of activities in 1949.

Political and Trade Union Work

His political and trade union work intensified in the years after 1938. Two important factors were the arrival of a tough Governor, Sir Arthur Richards, and the coming of the Second World War. The latter in itself, even without the presence of a chief representative of the Colonial power like Richards, would have meant increased tension in a political situation which was being stimulated by the press and the participation of a number of colourful and brilliant personalities. It was at this time that Manley and Bustamante worked together for several years, with no separate union being sponsored by Manley, and no other political party but the P.N.P. Nethersole, as Deputy leader of the party, was closely associated with the two dominant figures. This meant platform work and a great deal of travelling, but it also meant painstaking research, and preparation for papers submitted to the Moyne Commission.

When the war started and Bustamante was interned, Nethersole was not only among the forefront of those who pleaded with the Colonial Office for his release, but he aided Ken Hill in the difficult task of keeping the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union alive under the wartime restrictions. The Trade Union Council had already been set up as an advisory body and the B.I.T.U. had participated in it. Nethersole was made President of this, having already served as President of several of the sub or craft unions.

Nethersole's connection with Ken Hill, which had begun with the Reform Association had led him directly into trade union activity - where his status as a man who, socially, was of the managerial and employing classes himself, certainly helped. But he also had professional and financial experience and expertise and free local advice to offer. The tradition of dues paying was just coming into full vogue and employment, even for skilled men, was often precarious. Nethersole's financial knowledge, which had already brought him to prominence in local government, was therefore especially valuable.

When Manley and Bustamante split, it meant a new development in the politics of the country, and thus for Nethersole himself. It was a testing time and even the personality and influence of Manley might not have been enough to hold followers when there was the daunting prospect of making a political, and perhaps a personal enemy of Bustamante, whose generosity of personality was not fully clear in those trying days, although Nethersole probably knew him better than most, to the extent that Ms. Sylvia Wynter, in writing about the National Heroes of Jamaica some years ago, saw Nethersole both as an opponent of Sir Arthur Richards along with Bustamante and Manley, and also (perhaps surprisingly to the uninitiated) as an advisor to both of the great figures.

By this stage of his life then, just into his 40s, Nethersole had perhaps lived up to many of his ideals of the Rhodes scholarship, and shown the variety of interests commented on by a student of his life, Noel White. He may have shown dominance or supreme excellence yet, by the harshest of standards, but he had certainly more than dabbled, and achieved some eminence in cricket, politics, trade unionism, public finance and law. He had shown the tenacity which had earned him the nickname Crab so much earlier, and perhaps in contradiction to the above he had become perhaps the best conciliator and reconciliator in Jamaica. So much so in fact, that while only Bustamante and Manley and maybe Ken Hill might have been thicker in things on the political and industrial fronts, he seems to have escaped the attentions of the colonial prosecutors, and the Courts.

The 1944 Elections

The 1944 elections probably confirmed Nethersole as a professional politician, although he lost to Lynden Newland, another trade unionist of note, who happily is still with us and, like his erstwhile opponent, is one of the few politicians in modern Jamaica truly regarded with bitterness by very few. The universal adult suffrage for which the P.N.P. had fought did not bring them immediately to office - Nethersole the Minister was not yet to be. But Labour was in, and unionists were in also, in the persons of men like Newland and his leader Bustamante. If the P.N.P. platform, as distinct from the issues, was partly or even largely to blame for the defeat, then Nethersole had to take a good bit of the blame.

He played a very important role in drawing up the platform which might have turned off a good many people, particularly sections of it which were socialist and which seemed to have welcome financial prospects for some. In view of this, it was surprising that Nethersole, the conciliator, was to be Chairman of the investigating committee within the party, which was finally responsible, in the early 50s, for ejecting the 4 H's - the Hill brothers, Ken and Frank, Arthur Henry and Richard Hart from the party, because of their extreme leftist views, and supposed desire to stage a leadership coup.

Before these events took place, there were two other major events of importance for Nethersole, which can be documented. These events were the Mental Hospital riots of 1946 and the 1949 general elections. In these elections Nethersole reversed the 1944 result in Central St. Andrew over Newland. This constituency was substantially middle-class and over the years coincidentally, has been associated with P.N.P. Ministers of Finance in the persons of Vernon Arnett and the present Minister David Coore. Nethersole thus became a Member of Parliament, and opened the door directly to the passage, which was to lead him to ministerial office and his important work.

Passing events made Nethersole even more important within the Party and Union structure. He had handled the nasty job of chairing the purge committee when he had to deal with his old friend and early political guide, Ken Hill. He was also chosen as the first President of the National Workers Union, which had been set up to replace the T.U.C. since the latter, for all practical purposes, had gone along with the four H's. Nethersole's role was thus increasingly crucial in the Party's preparation for the 1955 elections. After these were duly won by the P.N.P., Nethersole became Minister of Finance - his logical position as second man in the Party. This was twenty years ago, a very short time in a country's history, but the country has come a long way since then as far as the sophistication of administration goes. At that time Nethersole's portfolio included public finance, financial planning, taxation, banking and currency, and exchange control which were of primary importance.

Norman Manley had imported George Cadbury of the famous chocolate manufacturing family as an expert who was expected to provide intellectual nourishment to the planning. There was also obvious influence from Puerto Rico in expressed admiration for Governor Muñoz Marín's "Operation Bootstrap", as seen in the early stress on practical taxation which was also political taxation, in

that there was reduction in or removal of taxation on drays and bicycles. This move had the advantage of getting votes and at the same time removing from Government the obligation of collecting taxes at a non-economic rate.

The 1955 elections, for the first time since 1944, brought to a Jamaican administration a large number of formally educated men, although Nethersole's predecessor for the J.L.P., Donald Sangster, was a trained lawyer. This had not been the case with Sir Harold Allan, a country businessman who had originally been called Member for Finance and not Minister. This latter title had only come with the further constitutional changes of 1953, so that Nethersole was to be the first full pre-independence Minister. Nethersole had a real vision of independence and, in fact, extended and in spirit went beyond his constitutional limitations. Nethersole brought to his office the type of experience that his predecessors had not.

This experience came from his participation in local government and its financial affairs. He was influenced too by his father who would have been one of the few Jamaicans near the higher levels of colonial financial administration in the old days. These influences, along with his own reading and his association with people like Manley and the Hills combined to create a personal philosophy and vision just at the time when the constitutional bindings were being loosened.

Nethersole did not take long to start moving. In his local government days he would undoubtedly have had to do with John Mordecai, who had gone on to the pre-Federal Service, perhaps the most brilliant of the first generation of Jamaican civil servants after universal adult suffrage. Now he was to have the good fortune to work with Egerton Richardson, who had just risen to the newly created Financial Secretaryship, and the young sensation G. Arthur Brown who was to direct the newly created Central Planning Unit. Men like these were just waiting to show their mettle and to prove that they could surpass anything from the days of the old King's House and Colonial Secretariat, and they were prepared to work like slaves.

Sir Alexander Bustamante, Sangster and their colleagues had done a great deal to face down colonial patronage and insults. Manley, Nethersole, Glasspole and their colleagues were now going to work out new administrative techniques with a view to Jamaica's participation in a Federation of the West Indies, which was to be an independent dominion. This was not to be the case, but the civil servants and the politicians were well met, and some of the results that we see around us today began to emerge. Some of these were simple, but essential nonetheless, and their previous non-existence now seems absurd.

We now have, for instance, a Ministry of the Public Service. Nineteen years ago, within the first year of his term of office, Noel Nethersole was speaking about the necessity for job evaluation in the service. He did not stop there but proceeded to encourage the setting up of the Organization and Methods Division of the Ministry of Finance from which the Ministry of the Public Service was to spring. As it turned out the first Permanent Secretary of that Ministry was to be Egerton Richardson, Nethersole's Financial Secretary, who was also to serve as a member of the Board of the Bank of Jamaica at one point of his illustrious career. One result of the thinking behind an O & M division was an almost congruent decision to appoint finance control officers in each of the Ministries, responsible through the Permanent Secretaries to the Ministry of Finance.

Budget Presentation

This last move represented an effort at budgetary control on the administrative and direct governing levels. On the parliamentary level, so important constitutionally, and for image as well, Nethersole was also moving. The 1956 Budget debate saw some new trends in presentation. It was said, to begin with, that Nethersole would have liked to assume the British Exchequer tradition where the Prime Minister and Chancellor alone were directly privy to certain things, but by the Jamaican constitution of the time the whole Executive Council had to know before the Minister went to the House of Representatives. In referring to this Budget presentation, Ulric Simmonds, who was then the *Gleaner's* political reporter, and whose words at that time carried considerable weight, felt that Nethersole had adopted "a rather enlightened approach on the matter" and had influenced everything." His article continued, ". . . members who spoke, stuck to the subject matter and the debate was cogent and constructive." At that time, the system of Budget presentation was that of first presenting the expenditure Budget and then the Appropriations which were then referred to a finance committee of the whole House. In presenting the estimates, it was said that Nethersole spoke for only one hour, but when it came to the Appropriations, the view was that he "starred" in "the first real Budget presented in the history of the island." This time he spoke for about three hours when the House resumed after the meetings of the Finance Committee. Simmonds wrote that "the Minister of Finance presented the economic details of the island's position in a manner which left no doubt that the affairs of the country had been *fully* (author's stress) taken into the hands of the people."

Changes were coming. It was stressed, in fact, in the reports that Nethersole's Budget speech on the presentation of the Appropriations Bill was specifically seeking to apply revenue funds to the services of the island - as if this had almost not been the case before. 1956 was also to see at least one more step that a modern departmental and ministerial Government needed in the

financial arena. This came about when virement of funds was finally permitted by the Colonial Office in September, opening a whole new era, an era of manoeuvrability and flexibility to the Jamaican government in the use of public funds.

Secret Side

The open friendly man could have his secret side as Minister, however. We have already seen how he would have liked to follow some of the British tradition in Budget presentation. In 1957, Nethersole, along with Richardson and some of the other officials, really began their series of overseas trips to try to secure various loans.

By the end of the year, the *Gleaner* was so annoyed that their editorials were criticizing Nethersole for not talking, and for dealing with the country's business as if it were "a private family concern." Previously in Jamaica most financial deals had probably come from private family sources and were therefore not negotiated in secret, whereas Nethersole was trying to raise outside of Jamaica, an £8 million loan for development involving the construction of road, bridges, schools and other things which meant heavy capital expenditure. This was in June. By October, the British bank rate had been increased and the cost of the projected loan had gone up and so had the cost of the projected developments. Nethersole faced with the differences between the Jamaican and British situations which his training and experience had really prepared him for, had now turned to maximum loan raising locally.

By October, the *Gleaner* was examining Nethersole and his proposals in a very catholic way. One long editorial brought in the situations in India and China, long before the Third World became either current or tired. It was the same kind of reaction that was perhaps best expressed in a tribute paid to him after his death by Richard Youngman, a white conservative Englishman who was President both of the Legislative Council and of the Chamber of Commerce and who had been around for a long time. Youngman said then, inter alia, that "Mr. Nethersole was worthy of a greater field of activity and that in some measure he was confined within the comparatively small area of Jamaica." Nethersole did not think this himself, however. It may be that Youngman had been thinking of things like the Exchange Control Authority being abolished and brought into the Ministry of Finance, or of the Advisory Committee set up by the Division of Overseas Investment in that Ministry, indicating that thought was being given to finding loan money outside normal British circles or through them. Within two years, this was in fact to happen. Nethersole and his advisors were introducing ministerial government in its true sense, as far as financial and planning matters were concerned.

Some of the situations Nethersole dealt with recur even today. When the Advisory Committee referred to above was set up with representatives of business (who have been referred to as the private sector, and now lately the productive sector), both Nethersole and Richardson were to be found speaking about "the importance of a high degree of mutual confidence between the Government and the business community" and Nethersole was to thank this community especially for their co-operation.

As in 1975 too, the J.L.P. opposition staged a walk-out in 1958 over the question of the scheduling of the Budget debate. The opposition wanted to deal with certain matters before the Federal elections, which were scheduled very soon after the opening of the debate, while the House was going to adjourn to resume on April 1st. The opposition, not surprisingly, lost the point. But Sangster was able to crow on the resumption, due to the Federal elections, whereas before, he had had to reply to the letter of Mr. Glasspole, our present Governor General, the then Minister of Labour and Leader of the House, that listening to Nethersole's speech would not have helped.

The defence against Sangster came with surprising vigour from a back-bencher Ken Clarke, an M.H.R. from St. Mary. He claimed that the J.L.P. were only envious because for the second year in succession, using the 1957 as against the 1956 figures, there was a record national income - £150 million as against £148 million. These figures, of course, did not mean very much, but Manley was to give the other side after Nethersole's death when he stated that his Government was the first which really knew how to spend money - and he was giving his friend and colleague Nethersole particular credit - so he did not have to add the word constructively. Significantly though, and it was also to Sangster's personal credit, and consistent with his own personality too, that his criticisms had been free of bitterness and hostility - two gentlemen were at work here. Such attitudes from both Sangster and Bustamante, his chief, probably made Nethersole's task easier than it might have been.

His own chief, Manley, praised him then and also the civil servants led by Mr. G. Arthur Brown, the present Governor of the Bank of Jamaica, who had produced at the Central Planning Unit an Economic Survey for 1957. Mr. Sangster called this a University discourse. This was at least in part a compliment at a time when the 'doctor syndrome' was still very high in Jamaica, and it would have been generally felt that the University would have had more brain power at its disposal than the Government in these specialists areas, although there was as yet only the Institute of Social and Economic Research, and not a full Faculty of Social Sciences at the University.

The Chief Minister, on the other hand, said, "There never has been a Budget presented that has reflected so much improvement and so much possibility in the economy of Jamaica. To look at these figures and talk about dull is to denounce yourself as a dunce ...our country is growing, Jamaica is developing, and what I find to be the most exciting thing is that the Minister of Finance is modernizing Jamaica's financial institutions. Here we have to depend entirely upon Canadian banks, English banks, and up to now on English money. Here we are about to assume the responsibilities of independence and in an area which hopes to be of dominion status in the next few years" (and here Manley was talking about the West Indian Federation).

The following portion of the speech was then italicized either by Manley himself or perhaps even more significantly by the *Gleaner*. " I am therefore proud to see that the Minister of Finance is modernizing our financial institutions; because a country that is not managing its own finances is not independent - it cannot claim to be."

Manley's speech had referred to some things which had been amplified in Nethersole's own speech, in which he had indicated that following on Government's attempt to create a local money market, including what he considered their successful proposals for re-discounting treasury bills, they were going to go on to the North American money market to gain more capital on top of what he called indigenous capital". He said that "a very competent and outstanding investment body had been appointed as agent in the U.S.", and he explained why it would have been stupid to have gone on to that market in the recession year of 1957 which had affected all the big North Atlantic countries - a point which is just as valid in 1975.

There was further thought going on too, about moves outside Jamaica which again are very valid at this point - when Manley made the claims that Jamaica was the only West Indian Government both to have Central Planning Unit and to be studying in depth the proposed European Common Market - both claims which might have been challenged by Trinidad but which still demonstrated vision - and in which Nethersole would have been heavily involved. This was to be the pattern indeed for the short time that Nethersole would have remaining to him, despite the fact that he knew of some of his health problems.

A Central Bank

Thus, while Nethersole had been involved in the practical work of Budget preparation and presentation, and in laying the early foundations for the raising of the North American loan, he and others had also been thinking even further ahead. In March, he had made an announcement that "the Government proposes to establish a Central Bank for the purpose of ensuring a fair and adequate control over the economic policy of the country and, at the same time, to enable the Government to have knowledge of the movement of capital inwards and outwards. As an ancillary, the Government proposes also to establish a Development Finance Corporation with a share capital of £4 million as an agency to provide short-term and medium-term credit facilities. A provision of £750,000 is included in the Development Estimates for these purposes and another £100,000 under a special building programme to provide accommodation".

Thus came the beginning of Bank of Jamaica and the Development Bank - although inflation and other more pleasant signs of progress have meant far more than \$1,500,000 (£750,000). The *Gleaner* commented on Nethersole's announcement, and brought out what neither Nethersole nor Manley had stated, that somehow there was a lack of sureness about Federal plans, because previous plans for a Central Bank had been shelved in 1956 due to Federal developments. What Nethersole did not say also was that a working committee had been set up from almost a year before and that it would submit a report before the end of 1958. In any event, whatever motivated his actions, or his secrecy, although Nethersole himself was no longer alive, the country was to be ready with these institutions to face the situations created by the negative vote on Federation in 1961 and the granting of independence in 1962. Indeed Nethersole himself had said that though "Jamaica was a country which could not have an institution fulfilling all the duties of a Central Bank... nevertheless this was an institution which would go a long way towards the further development of the country's welfare, and after years of discussions...he was sure that in the future this Bank would be one of the greatest aids which Jamaica would be able to make to the Federation". He had also said that "it had always been the intention of Government to set up a Development Finance Corporation and work had been going on over the past two years for that purpose."

There was appreciation for these efforts from friendly observers and friends - revealing why the *Jamaica Daily News* could editorialize in a caption under a picture of the impressive statue that we have here, that Nethersole was perhaps the greatest ever Finance Minister in Jamaica. This judgement was expressed in September 1975. Over 17 years earlier, a long-standing weekly newspaper now defunct, *The Jamaica Times*, in commenting on the current moves claimed that "It may not be generally recognized that... the Minister of Finance is making an immense contribution not only to the achievement of internal self-government for Jamaica, but also to the setting of part of the foundation for Dominion status in the West Indies. His obvious hope is to lift this island from a state of dependence on external financial charity - getting the country to stand on its own legs. If Jamaica succeeds in building a very sound economy with Trinidad in a similar position, the Federation having behind it the combined material strength of these two leading units, can hardly fail." Note the Federal focus again, but in a way their point was to be more than supported by Dr.

Eric Williams in his famous exercise in political mathematics after the Jamaica referendum in 1961, when he said that “ten minus one leaves nothing.”

Public Opinion, then the out and out party newspaper whether officially or not, had had at the time of the Budget a picture of Nethersole titled “Man walks in with a case of goods for the people.” The Editorial in this same issue, possibly written by O.T. Fairclough himself, an old friend and associate from 1930, stated, “we should think that this doubling of the national spending within four years has set a new record in the field of national budgeting...In providing for the establishment of a Central Bank and a Development Finance Corporation, Government has given further indication to control the country’s finances with a view to seeing that they are used to the best advantage of Jamaica.”

Bauxite Negotiations

Those were two of the perspectives of the late 50s - one has also been given from the mid-1970s again from a friendly source. A leading radical critic of our time, Dr. Trevor Munroe, has been rather more unkind, speaking from the perspective of the late 60s when he referred to Nethersole as “tinkering with the insubstantials of the colonial economy.” Yet even Munroe had some words of praise when dealing with the question of the bauxite negotiations. These were the first such since the original deal years ago. Munroe made the point that he felt that the P.N.P. which had started out as a socialist party, were more adept at running the private enterprise system than the J.L.P. had been implying, perhaps that because of the business experience that Manley and Nethersole had had in the different legal practices, they would have brought these skills into their ministerial practices. Munroe gave Nethersole specific praise, however, along with Manley and G. Arthur Brown for the bauxite negotiations saying in addition that “by 1957 Jamaica was the world’s largest producer of bauxite and the industry made sufficiently large sums of money to finance a series of impressive public projects.”

Nethersole himself had not made much of his own role, perhaps typically, but had spoken about the value of the negotiations and about Manley’s part. At the end of 1958, in the House, he had said, “The House would be relieved to hear that the supplementary estimates were fully covered by revenue in excess of what had been estimated - the main reason for that being those ‘historic negotiations’ between the Chief Minister and the bauxite companies - now that the results of these negotiations could be seen he had not a doubt that members of the opposition, had they been present, would have recognized even grudgingly the benefits of these negotiations.” Nethersole proceeded after this to make some moves administratively, which were not merely covered by the description “impressive public projects”, but were important, if rather mundane, and even obvious moves in the modernization of the country’s finances and government.

Government, for instance, had to have greater control over its own spending and to try to perfect its accounting and auditing systems. The Audit Department was therefore re-organized and the Deputy Auditor General was designated Paymaster General. These were not particularly glamorous, political, or attention-getting moves, but they all fitted in with the approach described by Dr. George Eaton, a student of these times who is now attempting to be a practitioner of administrative reform in ours. Eaton saw Nethersole as acting “under the influence of Keynesian economics” and as a man “who had been emancipated from the constraints of orthodox fiscal policy and public finance.”

We can also see around us some of the results of Nethersole’s vision carried on by administrations of both parties in the special building programmes to house certain Government departments, and to offset the rent Government was paying. Nethersole would not have been surprised to see Government becoming a profit-making landlord, or a big developer with, of course, a healthy social motivation.

Major Projects

The rest of Nethersole’s life was to be spent primarily on three major projects - the raising of the loan on the New York market, the launching of the Development Finance Corporation and the planning for the Central Bank. Of these, he was only to see the first, and he was to receive probably more praise for this than any other achievement in his public life, although indeed it was not as significant in fact or purpose as the other two projects.

The New York Age said, for instance, in July 1958, in discussing one of Nethersole’s visits, that “For Chief Minister Norman Manley’s government, this was a dramatic display of its ability to negotiate with a foreign country on its own initiative and with native talent.” i.e. primarily Nethersole and Richardson. In November, as a complement and a counterpart to these negotiations, it was announced that the Ministry was taking the initiative towards setting up a local stock exchange with meetings planned with representatives from what is now called the private or productive sector.

By the end of January 1959, Nethersole was back in New York for an eye operation but the work was also continuing without a let-up. Before the end of the first week in February, Manley was making a proud announcement: "The Minister of Finance has brought near to conclusion two years of patient and skillful negotiation and the public can be advised that with the lodging of the prospectus, the first official step has been taken towards raising the loan. Mr. Nethersole and his advisers are to be congratulated and publicly thanked for the patient expert work that it has taken to bring matters to this stage. It is a very difficult business for a foreign country to raise a loan on the American money market. If Jamaica succeeds in carrying this business to a successful conclusion it will be a historic achievement and high credit will have to be given to the special and particular gifts of the Minister of Finance and to the competent expert assistance he has had from the officials of his Ministry and particularly from the Financial Secretary." (Richardson).

The *New York Times*, the paper of "record", also dealt with the Jamaican loan, and with Nethersole, giving them a big feature in the financial section, indicating again perhaps what Youngman was to talk about later when he referred to Nethersole's capacity for playing a larger role on a bigger scene. Nethersole was in fact to end his life on this kind of note, on the point of travelling to negotiate again, and the subject, tragically fitting, in view of its importance, was once again the Bank.

On February 12th, just a week after Manley's warm tribute on the loan, it was announced that he was to go to Trinidad for talks on Federal banking. Jamaica's participation is in view of the Government's own plans for the establishment of a central bank for Jamaica, which may be merged later with the Federal banking system and the fact that the Hon. Robert Bradshaw, then the Federal Finance Minister, but before and after Chief Minister, and then Premier of St. Kitts, has borrowed largely from the Jamaican proposals in formulating plans for the Federal Bank." There was an additional news item on this date that Nethersole's travelling was delaying the presentation of the Budget for 1959-60. As it turned out he was not to present it. Nethersole lived to know that the loan that he had spent so much time and effort negotiating was over-subscribed in ten minutes. But he was not to make his trip to Trinidad, and Manley was to present a portion of the Budget.

Nethersole died in his 57th year, killed perhaps by a combination of overwork, a heart condition, and the additional stresses placed on him by his frequent travels and surgery on his eyes, and his wife's death from cancer the year before. It was immediately clear that the country had suffered a vast loss, from the reactions of all and sundry, at all levels of society, inside and outside of Jamaica, including the Caribbean area - reactions both to the man and the Minister. A man who had been blind in one eye for some time, but had not lost either private or public perspective at all.

Tributes

A pamphlet the size of this could be filled with tributes paid to Nethersole, but a cross-section will more than tell the tale. Who better to start with than his own friend and Premier, Norman Manley: "In recent years, as Minister of Finance, he has been engaged in work of the most profound importance to the future of his country. It became his duty to take charge of that all-important Ministry at a time when we were finally on that road to complete self-government and faced with the essential job of improving our financial institutions so that when we did achieve complete freedom, as indeed we have virtually, we would have the institutions which that status demands, and I think everybody will agree with me that he brought unrivalled talents to that task...The Minister and his staff, I think, shared a high common ambition and a clear-sighted understanding of the real necessities of national independence...first and foremost the ability to create native institutions which modern life demands of a self-governing people and there are no institutions more vitally important than those that are related to the mobilization of financial administration and the economy and monetary system of a country. One of the drawbacks about colonial life is that the banks, insurance companies and other financial institutions do not belong to the country. It cannot use finances as an instrument of policy. But one day the workings of the Ministry of Finance will change this. As a start Noel Nethersole established 3 goals: (1) to create inside the Government an effective instrument for the centralization of financial control and the development of financial policy; (2) to modernize the financial practices within this instrument, and (3) to stimulate and foster the growth of modern financial institutions. He achieved the first two aims and laid the foundations for the third".

His counterpart on the opposition side, Donald Sangster - who was also to die suddenly at a reasonably young age in the Prime Minister's post was as kind if not as detailed: "He was a deep thinker, a hard worker and a most generous foe. I do not think over all the years that I have passed with him I can recall him being unkind or harsh or unduly critical ... at all times he remained a gentleman."

The *Daily Gleaner* said that he was "Wholly responsible for ideas behind the work of transforming Jamaica's financial institutions from the pattern of Crown Colony administration into the modern machinery of a self-governing nation which it is now becoming." It also described him as having "One unswerving, unyielding, undying determination, passion and dedication - service to the full

degree of his life and his powers to a nation to be in Jamaica and the West Indies, a nation free of colonialism, a nation planning and doing its business as a small but equal people among the peoples of the world. We are confident, as he died, he knew that some day and soon what he worked for Jamaica and the West Indies, will be achieved.”

In the West Indies, the feelings were also strong. Dr. Eric Williams, then as now, the official leader of Trinidad, first as Chief Minister and now Prime Minister, and then as now not noted for being a sentimentalist, saw Nethersole’s death as “A blow to the entire progressive movement in the West Indies and particularly in the field of finance where we in Trinidad have been paying particular attention to the new policies and proposals being adopted in Jamaica.”

Sir Grantley Adams, the Federal Prime Minister virtually admitted that he would have liked Nethersole as Federal Finance Minister. After speaking of “the energy which he put into all financial matters and which makes his loss even more a tragedy, because there are too few West Indians who have the ability to handle financial problems... While I do not wish to give the impression of criticizing anybody for not coming into the Federal Parliament, I have always regretted that Mr. Nethersole did not stand for election.”

The Federal Finance Minister, Mr. Bradshaw, who might have felt justifiably slighted by such remarks himself spoke about “learning from him as much as I could about the intricate business of finance which he knew so much about.”

The last word in this section, like the first, should probably be said by Norman Manley who described him shortly after his death as “an almost irreplaceable figure”. Four and a half years later at the unveiling of the memorial tablet in the Jamaica College chapel, Manley said, “I wish there was another like him in Jamaica today - a wise counsellor who showed imperturbable confidence in facing every problem that confronted him - with remarkable insight into the historical forces of the time, he had made a remarkable contribution to the finance of the country. Many of the financial institutions of the country had been derived from his thinking.”

Greatest Monument

By this time many of the institutions had indeed been set up. His successor, Mr. Vernon Arnett, said that Nethersole’s “greatest monument is the structure and operation of the Ministry of Finance.” By 1960, in speaking on the bill dealing with the Bank of Jamaica, Mr. Arnett could say of Nethersole that “It had long been his profound conclusion that the organization of the financial institutions of the country were an indispensable part of our economic development and that the development of these institutions would give reality to our political status and enable Jamaica to press forward with its economic progress in an orderly and coherent manner, mobilizing local savings to the full and availing ourselves as we should, of capital inflow from abroad and always making sure that not only were the financial institutions of the country well enough organized to undertake the strain, but that a conscious monetary policy would develop. And the late Mr. Nethersole always saw the National Bank the subject of this Bill, which we term the Bank of Jamaica, sitting at the centre, lending its guidance and influencing all these matters and giving directions and energy to a great part.”

With the perspective of 1975, we can see that all these statements, observations and judgements were basically correct. The Bank of Jamaica and the Jamaica Development Bank have thrived under governments of different philosophies and the Bank of Jamaica, in its new headquarters, is going to be not only the Central Bank, but the main financial centre in ways that not many of us can see very clearly in detail.

Noel Nethersole who is here in sculpted image is also here in mind and in spirit. He probably would not have approved of the fuss being made over him at this stage, but his life and work show that he would surely have understood and foreseen the physical and intellectual dimensions of what is around us and what is going to be. He was indeed a Minister, but more than that, he was a creator, and for these two qualities, it is right and fitting that we remember him today.