Florida International University
FIU Digital Commons

LACC Occasional papers series. Dialogues (1980 - 1994)

Kimberly Green Latin American and Carribbean Center (LACC) Publications Network

September 1987

Multi-Party Politics in Jamaica (Dialogue #91)

Anthony John Payne
University of Sheffield, Department of Political Theory and Institutions

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/laccopsd

Recommended Citation
Payne, Anthony John, "Multi-Party Politics in Jamaica (Dialogue #91)" (1987). *LACC Occasional papers series. Dialogues (1980 - 1994)*. 22.
https://digitalcommons.fiu.edu/laccopsd/22

This work is brought to you for free and open access by the Kimberly Green Latin American and Carribbean Center (LACC) Publications Network at FIU Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in LACC Occasional papers series. Dialogues (1980 - 1994) by an authorized administrator of FIU Digital Commons. For more information, please contact dcc@fiu.edu.

MULTI-PARTY POLITICS IN JAMAICA

Anthony John Payne
Department of Political Theory and Institutions
University of Sheffield

Dialogue #91

September 1987

Published by the Latin American and Caribbean Center
Florida International University
Miami, Florida 33199

Editor: Richard Tardanico
Editorial Assistant: Sofia A. Lopez

PREFACE

Anthony John Payne is lecturer in politics, Department of Political Theory and Institutions, the University of Sheffield. A member of the Royal Institute of International Studies, he has been an advisor to the Caribbean Department of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and to the House of Commons' Foreign Affairs Committee. Among his books are The International Crisis in the Caribbean and Dependency Under Challenge: The Political Economy of the Commonwealth Caribbean.

Richard Tardanico
Editor
Occasional Papers Series Dialogues

MULTI-PARTY POLITICS IN JAMAICA

INTRODUCTION

Jamaica stands out in any comparative analysis of party systems in the Third World as one of the most convincing examples of multi-party politics to have emerged under conditions of underdevelopment. Indeed, it is not implausible to suggest that such a political system has taken root in the island. Two parties presently vie for political power in Jamaica: the People's National Party (PNP), founded in 1938, and the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP), formed in 1943. For more than forty years--a period that has seen the introduction of universal suffrage, the demise of British colonialism, and the advent of political independence--these two political parties have fought each other for control of the Jamaican state. They have at various times been challenged by third parties, but none has succeeded even in interrupting the PNP/JLP duopoly.

These two parties have regularly alternated in office, establishing what has become one of the traditions of Jamaican politics, namely, that no party should stay in power for more than two consecutive electoral terms. Thus the JLP won the first general election held in 1944, won again in 1949, but lost to the PNP in 1955. The PNP extended its victory in the 1959 election, but lost the pre-independence contest in 1962. The JLP again served for two terms, winning again in 1967, but losing office in 1972. The PNP was similarly victorious in 1976, only to be defeated, on schedule, as it were, in 1980. The JLP returned to government, called and won a controversial election in 1983, which the PNP chose not to fight, and, according

to local opinion polls, seems likely to lose the next election, which will be held in 1987 or, more likely, 1988. In other words, the historical record of two-party competition in Jamaica is not only real--in itself a rare and laudable feature of politics in the Third World--but seemingly neat and tidy in its shape.

It does not follow, however, that the character of multi-party politics, as practised over the years by the PNP and the JLP, has always been the same. It is possible to discern no less than four distinct stages in the system's evolution to the present day.

THE FOUR STAGES IN JAMAICA'S POLITICAL SYSTEM

Formation 1938-52

The PNP was actually not the first political party to be formed in Jamaica. That role was played by the so-called People's Political Party, founded on an explicitly racial basis by Marcus Garvey in 1927. It was handicapped by the then limited suffrage and by the mid-thirties had atrophied. Of greater long-term significance was the formation in this period of the first trade unions, notably the Jamaica Workers and Tradesmen Union (JWTU) established in 1935. This union came to political prominence in 1938 during the strikes and violent protests that broke out all over Jamaica on sugar estates, in the docks, and in factories in response to the depressed economic conditions of the time. The year earlier, it had recruited Alexander Bustamante, a flamboyant moneylender with exceptional oratorical skills, to travel around the island urging workers to organise and demand

better wages. His leadership and the union's resources were critical factors in the emergence of the labour rebellion (Post, 1978).

By this time middle-class elements in Jamaican society had also grasped the need for social, economic, and political reform and saw the best means to this as the formation of a nationalist political party. They sought to involve Norman Manley, the island's leading lawyer, who, after some resistance, agreed to chair a steering committee set up specifically to organise the founding conference of a party. Thus the PNP was inaugurated at a public ceremony at the Ward Theatre in Kingston in September 1938. Its initial goals, as outlined by Manley in his speech from the platform, were those of a conventional colonial nationalist party of the time: political education, the raising of the standard of living of the masses, the development of a national spirit, and the pursuit of self-government (Nettleford, 1971). In 1940, however, the party moved forward to adopt a Fabian socialist position, advocating public ownership or control of the means of production, and espousing a belief in social justice and equality.

The intention of the PNP's founders was to unite the working class and the middle class within one progressive movement. To this end, Bustamante, who was in fact a distant cousin of Manley, was present at the inauguration and was expected to become one of the PNP's leaders. However, he had been expelled from the JWTU at the end of 1937 after trying to force himself into the presidency, and had responded by organising his own personal trade union, which was formally registered as the Bustamante Industrial Trade Union (BITU) in January 1939 (Eaton, 1975). Bustamante had himself installed as the union's president for life and, buoyed up by his popularity amongst the mass of the working class, was in no mood to concede leadership to any rival. Despite the fact that Manley secured his release from prison

during the disturbances, Bustamante repeatedly denigrated the lawyer's class background, claiming that it rendered him ineligible as a leader of the masses. Upon his second release from prison in 1942, Bustamante broke from the PNP and the following year formed his own party, the JLP.

The split left the PNP with little working-class or grassroots support. At the time of the break Bustamante's union had a total membership of 20,612, of whom 13,741 were dues-paying members (Eaton, 1975). This was a considerable loss to sustain; to compensate, the PNP set about the task of building up its membership, using the group as the basic unit of the party. Such groups were established in all parishes during the forties, reaching a total of 190 by 1951 (Munroe, 1972). In the trade union field, the party used the Trade Union Council (TUC), hitherto an advisory body that had included the leaders of the BITU, to organise the smaller craft-oriented unions that remained loyal to the PNP and to begin to try to win over BITU members. Initially, this was a most difficult task because of Bustamante's enormous standing with the Jamaican lower classes.

The 1944 elections, held for the first time under universal adult suffrage as part of a new constitution promulgated in the aftermath of the labour rebellion, also constituted the first political battle between the PNP and the JLP. They did not as yet have the field to themselves. About half the candidates were independent, while the traditionally dominant white upper class presented itself to the people in the guise of the Jamaica Democratic Party (JDP). In its campaign the PNP emphasised nation-building, the right of self-determination, and the need for maximum production and full employment. References to socialism were dropped. The JLP, by contrast, hardly presented a manifesto at all, preferring to base its appeal on mass loyalty to its leader. Bustamante nevertheless made clear his firm

opposition to self-government (Munroe, 1972). The result reflected the class and racial character of the parties. The JLP, representing the more numerous black lower classes, won 41.4 percent of the vote and twenty-two of the thirty-two seats; the PNP, representing the brown middle class, secured 23.5 percent of the vote and five seats; and the JDP failed to win a seat at all. The extent of the dominance of the PNP and JLP was constrained, however, by the fact that independent candidates won 35 percent of the vote and gained five seats in the assembly.

The PNP minority in the new parliament proved to be highly articulate, putting forward a variety of plans for social and economic improvements. What was significant was that these increasingly had a socialist flavour. The party called particularly for state intervention to promote economic development, including the nationalisation of utilities, transport, and communications, and the establishment of public corporations to promote agriculture and industry. In combination with its continuing organisational efforts through party groups and the TUC, this appeal enabled the PNP to make increasing inroads into the lower class vote. As a result, in the 1949 election it won slightly more of the vote, although failing to dislodge the JLP from its majority of seats in the parliament. Independents were reduced to two. This election was very important to the development of modern Jamaican politics:

> On the one hand, it firmly established the dominance of the two major parties, and on the other hand it made the PNP's socialism an issue and generated the strange coalition between the black lower class and sectors of the white upper class which regarded Bustamante's populist and personalist appeal and politics as a lesser evil than the PNP's socialist and organizational appeal and politics (Stephens, 1986: 18).

Within the PNP, it also set in motion an internal struggle between left and right over the merits of the party's socialist commitment.

Convergence 1952-69

By 1952 ideological conflict within the PNP had reached a decisive stage. At the end of 1951 two right-wing members of the TUC executive had resigned and set up a rival union. The TUC instituted disciplinary proceedings against the dissidents who responded by accusing the left of trying to take over the party and labour movement. A commission of enquiry was established, headed by Manley, which eventually recommended the expulsion of the left's leading advocates (Munroe, 1972). They included the so-called four H's--Ken Hill, Frank Hill, Arthur Henry, and Richard Hart. The problem for the PNP was that in this "purge," as it came to be known, the party lost many of its most active organisers and political educators and much of its working-class base. The left controlled the TUC and took the union with them out of the party. The leadership responded by forming a new union wing, the National Workers Union (NWU), and appointing Michael Manley, the younger son of Norman, as organiser. He was a great success, launching his recruitment drive amongst the sugar workers and, before long, displacing the TUC in the vital bauxite industry (Manley, 1975). By 1955 the NWU had taken control of most of the major unions formerly in the TUC and had 24,361 members, 8,961 of whom paid dues. Although, according to Eaton's (1975) figures, the BITU retained a substantial numerical supremacy, with a total at that time of 64,164 members, of whom 45,876 paid dues. The NWU at least gave the PNP a continuing connection with the Jamaican working class.

The significance of the "purge," in short, was to make the PNP more like the JLP. This process of convergence between the two major parties continued during the remainder of the fifties, and beyond, to a point where, by the mid-sixties, it had left its mark on virtually every aspect of political life in Jamaica--party structure, composition, support base, and

general orientation, including ideological direction. In response to the PNP's growing electoral and organisational strength, as displayed in the 1949 election, the JLP in 1951 adopted a formal constitution that established a branch structure analogous to the PNP's group system. These organisational efforts bore fruit, for by the 1956 party conference officials were claiming to have set up over a hundred newly registered branches throughout the island and thus to have increased JLP membership to over 20,000 persons (Munroe, 1972). For its part, the PNP sought to make up for the loss of cadres experienced in 1952 and worked hard to maintain its lead in the number of party groups in existence. According to the party's records, they went up from 190 in 1951, to 420 in 1955, and a record of 990 in 1959 (Munroe, 1972). These figures certainly correspond to the electoral performance of the two parties in the fifties, the PNP winning the 1955 election--by general agreement, largely as a consequence of its organisational superiority--and then consolidating its victory in the 1959 campaign.

What was clear, however, in the operation of both parties in this period was that, despite the existence of these grassroots units and the elaboration of procedures by which they were represented in the upper levels of the party structure, decision-making at the top was highly concentrated, with the respective party leaders having a predominant say. There was perhaps a slightly wider elite group running the PNP than the JLP, in which Bustamante's writ ran more or less unchallenged, even after his retirement in 1964, and as a consequence decision-making was more collegial. Viewed from the perspective of the ordinary party member, however, the difference was minimal. In a detailed analysis of party organisation in Jamaica in the sixties, Robertson (1972) challenged and effectively undermined Bradley's (1960) rather naive thesis that the PNP and JLP were examples of genuine

"mass" parties. He demonstrated, for example, that grassroots party members had virtually no input in the selection of candidates for MP or parish councillor, and in fact had very little knowledge of the rules and procedures for participation in the decision-making organs of the parties to which they belonged. He concluded that both the PNP and the JLP were "personalist political parties," incapable of performing any other role than that of electoral machines sustained by the dispensation of patronage.

In terms of social composition the two parties also grew more alike in the fifties and sixties. The PNP leadership had always been dominated by brown middle-class professionals and the JLP leadership steadily became so, especially as ambitious would-be politicians realised that the route to the top was much quicker in the JLP than the PNP, where the number of qualified aspirants was always larger. Over time too, the proportion drawn from the elite professions increased in both parties (Stone, 1980). Party activists for their part tended to come mainly from lower class backgrounds, whether they were actually unemployed, members of the employed working class, or small farmers. Their motivation, according to Robertson (1972), was generally neither ideological, nor based on a commitment to good citizenship, but was of an openly instrumental, patronage-oriented nature. Both parties had union wings, as well as supporters amongst the Jamaican capitalist class who provided their main source of financial support. Some local capitalists even supported both parties in order to be sure of access to those in power, regardless of the result of elections. Finally, by the mid-sixties both the PNP and the JLP had rival groups of party supporters organised as political gangs. This represented an unsavoury and long-standing feature of Jamaican party politics, but developed inexorably from relatively mild forms of intimidation, such as stone-throwing, to the widespread use of guns (Lacey,

1977). It is often said that this type of political violence was initiated by the JLP; if so, there can be no doubt that the PNP responded in kind.

Trends of convergence as experienced in all these areas were also felt in the social character of the support that accrued to the parties, yet without ever extending so far as to eliminate completely the original sharp distinctions of image. It was certainly the case throughout the fifties and sixties that the PNP and JLP won votes from all parts of the Jamaican class spectrum, but within that common pattern there were still important differences. Stone's (1973) survey work, carried out in the early seventies, is authoritative here. He found, for example, that, compared with the JLP, support for the PNP was markedly stronger among the middle classes, somewhat stronger among blue-collar workers, and noticeably weaker among businessmen and the lower classes. The PNP was also still more attractive to brown voters: 65 percent of brown white-collar workers, as opposed to 58.5 percent of black, expressed a PNP preference, as did 56.1 percent of brown working-class respondents, as opposed to 44.5 percent of black. A further distinction lay in the urban-rural divide: PNP support was to be found predominantly in the Kingston and St. Andrew metropolitan areas and in parishes with important urban or tourist centres, while the JLP dominated heavily rural parishes populated mainly by small farmers.

Given the similarities of structure and composition already identified, it is not surprising that the PNP and JLP should have approached the main issues and policy choices of the fifties and sixties in a similar way. There was the bitter split that emerged between 1960 and 1962 over the question of Jamaican participation in the West Indies Federation. Bustamante fiercely opposed the PNP's support for the Federation and won the 1962 election on the basis of the insular chauvinism he was able to whip up

on the issue (Payne, 1980). However, a good deal of opportunism underlay this conflict and did not alter the fact that both parties were unequivocally pro-Western in their international orientation. Both also subscribed to the conventional economic wisdom of the era, endorsing the pro-capitalist strategy of "industrialisation by invitation." Indeed, the whole question of ideology was deliberately played down for fear that it might arouse expectations amongst the masses, which would prove dangerously volatile, if unfulfilled, and thus threaten the stability of the political system in general.

In other words, the leaders of the PNP and the JLP realised that each had a powerful interest in the continued functioning of a multi-class party system based upon a convergence of stance between the two parties. As the traditionally more conservative of the two, the JLP was unlikely to challenge this orientation. The only ideological flurry that occurred in the party in this period resulted from a speech made in 1961 by Edward Seaga, who briefly earned a reputation as a left-winger by drawing attention to the gap between the "haves and have-nots" in Jamaican society. The PNP's history was different, however, and ideological conflicts did continue, albeit beneath the surface. Norman Manley, for example, never ceased to refer to himself as a socialist at heart, although he usually added that it was always necessary to adapt doctrines to the historical circumstances of the time. Nevertheless, by the early sixties he was becoming more disturbed by the social failures of the capitalist development model hitherto adopted in Jamaica and gave encouragement to a group of younger PNP activists who were arguing for a return to the party's early socialist position.

Their base in the party was the Young Socialist League, founded in 1962, which they used to get themselves elected to leadership positions.

Left-right conflicts were revived and the 1964 conference witnessed considerable arguments over policy (Lacey, 1977). Norman Manley backed the left and a much more radical programme was approved, including a commitment to land reform, nationalisation of the utilities, an improvement in the social services, and an eradication of illiteracy. At the end of a long political career, though, the elder Manley did not have the energy or perhaps the courage to push this programme forward. The PNP did not contest the 1967 election on a socialist platform, preferring to call more blandly for "freedom" from repression and the extension of welfare provision in general (Miller, 1981). The JLP won the election and continued in office for five more years, but for the long-run development of Jamaican party politics what was more significant were these signs of a stirring of ideological debate in the PNP.

The point was that they called into question the type of politics that the PNP and JLP had jointly practised since 1952. It was in essence a clientelist politics shaped by the neo-colonial nature of the Jamaican economy. The low level of stable industrial employment made available to the working class by the highly capital-intensive strategy of industrialisation pursued throughout the fifties and sixties meant that employment through the state became ever more crucial as a source of livelihood. A patronage tradition therefore developed in which political support was exchanged for the material benefits of a job, even a home. Mass participation in the system became dependent upon faith in the welfare value of party politics. To insure against penetration of the system by a radical third alternative feeding on the material disaffection of the opposition party's clients, it became unofficially accepted that the opposition party of the day would be granted a sizeable minority portion of the available state

largesse to distribute. Social discontent was thus both reduced and channelled towards the party in office, not the system itself, underscoring once again the role played by party politics in this period in containing radical or revolutionary expressions of political alienation.

Mobilisation 1969-80

In 1969 the PNP acquired a new leader in Michael Manley. He had been president of the NWU for a long time, but had only been elected to parliament in the 1967 election. Yet when his father decided to retire, his support in the trade union movement and the family name made him the obvious successor. He was urged to stand by the younger elements in the party and apparently indicated to his supporters that he was willing to do so only on the proviso that his selection would involve a clear ideological differentiation from the JLP (Stephens, 1986). This was not clear at the time, or indeed for some while afterwards. Although Manley (1982) has subsequently claimed that all of his later programme was conceived in his mind at the outset, his first efforts as party leader were not focused upon ideological definition. Instead, a general "people orientation" was adopted and made the focus of the party's campaigning up to and including the 1972 election. This had the advantage of not prejudicing the party's traditional multiclass coalition while enabling Manley personally to project a vigorous, populist image.

The blend was an enormous electoral success, the PNP winning by the largest majority of seats ever gained by either party in Jamaican history up to that date. Stone's (1974) post-election survey confirmed both the cross-class nature of PNP support and the non-ideological nature of its appeal. He noted that

> only 44% of the sample were able or willing to articulate an image of the party they supported which yielded some basis on which to describe the value frames of reference that inform and influence partisan sentiments (Stone, 1974: 56).

Only 4 percent were able to give an ideological explanation for their voting decision. In short, the victory was a triumph primarily for Manley's charismatic political personality, but also much more for the PNP's organisational and party-building successes than for its achievements in ideological education.

Indeed, the item that had received Manley's most immediate attention when he became party leader was the organisation, which was then at a particularly low ebb. A major membership drive was swiftly announced and a youth arm, the PNP Youth Organisation (PNPYO), established. The latter unquestionably played a big part in the 1972 campaign. However, Manley had in mind something more than the mere development of the party into an effective election-winning mechanism. He wanted to build a mass party based upon genuine democratic participation and mobilisation. In 1972 he persuaded D. K. Duncan, a young left-wing activist who had developed a reputation as an excellent organiser during the election campaign, to take on the job of national organiser with this specific brief. Two years later Duncan was elected PNP general secretary and was himself able to place other young left-wingers in prominent positions in the party secretariat. Apart from the creation of regional councils in 1975, few major changes were made in the party's formal structure; it was regarded as having been placed on a basically sound footing back in the forties. Duncan and his staff did, however, try to get more grassroots people on to the party executive, which had historically been elitist in character. They also seized the opportunity of such by-elections as occurred in the PNP's first term to get out "in the field" and build up support for the left amongst local party activists.

The organisational question cannot, therefore, be entirely separated from the matter of ideology. Although it was not made public until much later, it is now known that the PNP began a major internal discussion of its ideology as soon as the 1972 election was won. The first cabinet appointed by Manley was dominated by the pragmatic, or right, wing of the party, but enough has already been said to indicate that, with Manley's backing, the tide was beginning to run for the left. The emphasis in the ideological discussions was accordingly on the need for the PNP to revive its socialist heritage. Interim documents were presented to a party meeting in August 1974, but their contents were leaked to the press forcing the leadership to reveal the new thrust before it had been as widely debated in the party as was planned. So in September 1974 at the 36th annual PNP conference, Manley formally restated the party's belief in a "democratic socialism" that was flexible and undoctrinaire, stood for the "equality of man," and held that "human beings are moral and capable of acting together to achieve common purposes" (Jamaica Daily News, 16 September 1974). His tone was conciliatory and subsequent detailed statements confirmed that the model the party had in mind was moderate and completely non-Marxist in character. Reaction in the party itself was muted. Manley had personally promoted the process of ideological self-definition, and his position in the party and in Jamaican society as a whole was unassailable at the time. Those furthest to the right in the party made no open objections, and those on the left were satisfied for the moment with their gains.

While these changes were occurring within the PNP, the JLP by contrast was in some disarray. It was demoralised by the unpopularity it had experienced in government from the end of the sixties onwards and by the crushing defeat it had sustained in 1972. In its first two or three years of

opposition the party organisation was allowed to decay, few formal statements of policy were made, and a struggle began to wrest the leadership away from Hugh Shearer, the retiring prime minister. By late 1974 that had been won by Seaga who thus assumed the post just as his opponents were declaring their commitment to socialism. He responded to the ideological challenge by branding the new doctrine as a covert form of communism. In fact, the term socialism/communism became his favourite form of description for it. These attacks had little immediate impact on public opinion, but they did indicate one of the main weapons that the JLP under Seaga intended to use against the government. After many years of avoiding the issue, ideological battle had been joined in Jamaican party politics.

The change was also reflected in the emergence of a third party on the political scene--the formation in December 1974 of the communist Workers' Liberation League (WLL) under the leadership of Trevor Munroe, a lecturer in politics at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. To begin with, the WLL was highly critical of the PNP, taking the view that the party basically represented the interests of the national bourgeoisie and that the decision "to dust off the old slogans of bourgeois socialism" was only designed "to harness and channel the rising revolutionary consciousness of the masses (and) restrain them from taking a left, democratic course" (Munroe, 1974: 8). By the end of 1975, however, the continued development of socialist initiatives by the Manley government, the opening of cordial relations with Cuba, and the JLP's deployment of anti-communist propaganda combined with other factors to persuade the WLL to change its line and adopt a position of "critical support" for the PNP. Thereafter it played an increasingly important role in maintaining leftward pressure on the government.

In the light of these developments in the party system, it was not surprising that the 1976 election should have been characterised by a new level of mobilisation and ideological conflict. The PNP was fired by its confrontation with local capital and what it interpreted as externally-inspired "destabilisation." It had deepened its commitment to democratic socialism since 1974 and had begun to address the difficult questions of class struggle and imperialism. Indeed, it made "anti-imperialism" its main campaign theme. There is no doubt too that it succeeded in arousing an unprecedented degree of national fervour to its cause. Previous efforts to build up the party at the grassroots level were vindicated as cadres (including some WLL personnel) emerged to plan and organise campaign activities all over the island. Public meetings were held frequently and attended by huge numbers--the rally in Montego Bay at which Manley announced the date of the election reportedly attracting a crowd of around 100,000 people (Stone, 1980). The PNP's message was thus transmitted mainly by face-to-face means, which enabled it to offset the extensive media advertising that the JLP's usual financial superiority was able to provide. The JLP could not match either the intensity of the PNP's ideological conviction or the extent of its popular mobilisation, and it went down to predictable defeat.

The pattern of the vote revealed considerable changes in the social base of the two main parties since 1972. Despite winning 57 percent of the votes the PNP no longer represented the majority of people of all classes. Its support amongst capitalists and the middle class all but disappeared, but was more than displaced by gains among the working class and unemployed (Stone, 1980). The effect of the ideological intensification of Jamaican politics had been to polarise class voting patterns, leaving the PNP very much the party of the lower social classes and the JLP as the party of the

upper end of the social system. The old multi-class politics of the fifties and sixties had, to all intents and purposes, been destroyed. There was also a new and noticeable generational aspect to the result relating to the youth vote. This was more important than normal in 1976 because of the lowering of the voting age to eighteen since the previous election. Stone (1980) has shown that the PNP enjoyed a two-to-one lead over the JLP amongst voters under thirty years of age, a tribute in good part to the active youthful element in the party.

What has to be understood clearly is that, as a result of the process of mobilisation and the changing nature of its support base, the PNP had become a quite different sort of political party from the old days. The right had mostly been prepared to accept the populist flavour of the early embrace of democratic socialism, but they undoubtedly bridled at the growing ascendancy of the left in the heady and euphoric period that immediately followed the election victory. The make-up of the new cabinet was more left-wing than before; Duncan was appointed to head a new ministry of national mobilisation, which effectively became the PNP secretariat by another name; and a group of radical young academics were asked to prepare an "alternative" plan to rescue the economy from impending crisis. Although the left was always more articulate, the right or moderate wing of the party was the more numerous, especially in the parliamentary group. It was, however, divided amongst itself, especially on the critical matter of economic management (Manley, 1982), and was still reluctant to challenge Manley himself.

Accelerating economic difficulties and the decision in April 1977 to reject the left's alternative plan and seek assistance instead from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) provided the moderates with the

opportunity to begin their fight-back. The evidence suggests that the months leading up to the party conference in September 1977 were ones of great internal bitterness within the PNP. The left was in retreat and experienced losses in the annual elections to the national executive committee. A more damaging setback followed with the announcement of Duncan's resignation as general secretary and minister of national mobilisation just after the conference ended. According to Duncan, the right of the party had conducted a campaign against him, which alleged that he was the leader of a left-wing plot to displace Manley. This rumour, he claimed, had been deliberately and widely leaked and had made his position untenable (Daily Gleaner, 9 October 1977). In the wake of his departure other left-wingers resigned from the party secretariat and the right seized the moment to disassociate itself and the government from some of the wilder statements and actions of the PNPYO. In sum, the moderate wing of the PNP successfully reasserted itself, but at the price of undermining much of the coherence and vitality that had enabled the party to dominate Jamaican politics so completely from the early seventies onwards.

True to the see-saw character of the Jamaican party system, as the PNP began to divide and weaken, the JLP at last began to recover, not merely from its defeat in the 1976 election but from its original loss of office back in 1972. The number and range of its verbal attacks on the government increased, embracing issues of economic management, the Cuban/communist threat, movement towards a one-party state, and alleged breaches of human rights. Seaga broke new ground by taking his campaign abroad and trying to win foreign allies in his attempt to undercut support for the PNP. Perhaps most important of all, though, the party moved to renovate its own organisation. The JLP leadership had eventually come to realise that the rules of

the political game in Jamaica had changed during the period of the PNP's ascendancy and that, as a consequence, no party could win office without an effective political mobilisation capacity. In the last few months of 1977 it founded auxiliary organisations for women (the Women's Freedom Movement), farmers (Progressive Farmers' Association), and higglers (Jamaican Association of Higglers); revitalized its youth organisation, Young Jamaica; and for the first time instituted area councils to strengthen the party machinery. The model was transparently the PNP's own organisational structure. Although the JLP's mobilisation capacity was not immediately transformed by these moves, the essential groundwork had been laid and the benefits would be bound to follow.

In fact, all the essential elements of the next contest between the parties had been put in place by the end of 1977. The remaining years of the Manley government up to the election of October 1980 merely saw an extension and deepening of trends already identified. Left-right divisions in the PNP continued, but as the social and political costs of the IMF connection began to be felt it was the right that was placed on the defensive and the left that again began to take the initiative. The symbolic issue came to be Duncan's return to the post of general secretary, which was eventually achieved at the 1979 conference. His reappointment inspired a brief attempt within a newly appointed party economic affairs commission to work out a viable "non-IMF" economic strategy for the government, but the truth was that the PNP was already irreparably damaged by past divisions in the face of crippling economic problems. For its part, the JLP heightened its anti-communist rhetoric, continued to strengthen its organisation by trying to get the BITU involved in more political action, and flexed its new mobilisation capacity in a number of mass demonstrations, notably over the

gas price rises of January 1979 when Kingston and several other towns were virtually brought to a halt. Finally, the WLL, transmuted in August 1978 into the Workers Party of Jamaica (WPJ), complicated the picture by announcing in mid-1979 that it was prepared to extend its policy of "critical support" for the PNP into an actual alliance. The PNP was taken by surprise and the moderate element within it embarrassed; the JLP was delighted to be offered more ammunition for its anti-communist campaign, especially as it was obvious by 1980 that informal collaboration was taking place between the WPJ and the PNP left.

The high levels of tension and mobilisation generated over the preceding years made the 1980 election the most violent ever in Jamaica (Waters, 1985). Some six hundred people were killed in political violence between February and October 1980. The result showed a massive swing to the JLP, which won 59 percent of the vote and an extraordinary fifty-one of the sixty seats in parliament. The shift of opinion affected all classes, giving the JLP a majority in all the main social categories, although without entirely reversing the closer class alignment of 1976. Turnout was a record 77 percent of eligible voters, again revealing the extent of the politicisation of the people that had been brought about in this highly charged phase of Jamaican political development.

Restraint 1980-86

By contrast, the conduct of party politics in the early eighties was characterised by what can only be described as restraint. That is not to say it was uneventful, but it is to recognise that leading politicians in both major parties understood how close the Jamaican democratic system had come to collapse in 1980. Political competition had reached such an

intensity that many of the normal rules of democratic party politics had begun to be ignored. Violence was rife; the loyalty of the security forces to the state was in question following an attempted coup in June 1980, and there were doubts expressed as to whether elements in both the JLP and PNP would actually accept defeat in the election. Certainly, in the wider context of Third World politics it is remarkable, and much to its credit, that the PNP government was prepared to relinquish office quietly and peacefully when faced with electoral rejection. Many a governing party in other parts of the world has failed this test of democratic conviction. Nevertheless, it was evident that Jamaica's long-term stability would benefit from a period of lower-key politics following the 1980 election. In any case, this was, to some extent, inevitable. The PNP was exhausted. Its leaders were worn down by the strains of government and its supporters and activists demoralised by the effects of economic hardships. The JLP was obviously preoccupied with the formation of its government and with matters of policy. Only the WPJ had an interest in the continued escalation of political conflict and it was too small to bring this about on its own.

Over the next two or three years the JLP's main contribution to declining levels of political excitement related to its unsuccessful management of the Jamaican economy. It quickly became apparent that, as a result of a mixture of internal and external factors, the Seaga government was not going to be able to effect the economic recovery it had promised. The hopes aroused by the JLP's 1980 campaign slogans of "deliverance" and "jingling in the pockets" were dashed at a very early stage in the life of the government, producing not so much a popular mood of anger but rather one of despair--a growing feeling that perhaps there was no answer at all to Jamaica's long-standing economic problems. Within two years of coming to

power the JLP had lost its lead in the opinion polls and, since it had largely neglected the party machinery since the time of the election, was unable to revitalise its support. Within the party the perception also grew that too much power was concentrated in Seaga's hands and that he was increasingly out of touch with public reaction to his free market policies. This produced no visible signs of discord, but created an unease, especially amongst older style JLP politicians who, unlike Seaga, maintained close ties with the party's trade union base.

The PNP deliberately took time to consider its position after its defeat. There was an emotional need for soul-searching and for left and right to argue out their interpretations of the party's failure. In February 1981 Manley offered his resignation as leader to the national executive committee, but it was rejected by a massive majority (109 to zero with three abstentions), thus re-establishing his command of the party, as intended. He immediately insisted upon the ending of all ties, formal and informal, with the WPJ; otherwise he continued to try to hold the two wings of the party together. By late 1981, however, the PNP was ready to begin "rebuilding for the future," as the theme of the party conference of that year put it. The most important decision taken was to proceed with a political education programme for constituency leaders aimed at raising the level of ideological understanding in the party. All PNP officers and candidates were also required to attend a specified number of these political education sessions. Two-party schools were set up and a good deal of progress made, although it should be noted that the sector of the party where the political education programme made least headway was the parliamentary group (Stephens, 1986).

The main problem that came to light in the reappraisal undertaken at the 1981 party conference was the desperate state of the PNP's finances. Prior to 1972 it had relied on its allies amongst the local capitalist class; between 1972 and 1980 it had been able to utilise the resources of the state; and after 1980 it was dependent almost wholly on the small amount of money that could be provided by the NWU. The victim of this predicament was Duncan, who was again removed as general secretary in January 1983, primarily because PNP-oriented businessmen made his replacement the condition for considering their renewal of financial support for the party (Stephens, 1986). His successor, Paul Robertson, was also more associated with the left than the right, but that mattered less: the fact was that Duncan had become the symbol of the "dangerous" wing of the PNP. Even in his absence, though, the money did not exactly begin to flow and the party remained in financial difficulty.

Significantly, what the PNP did not spend much time doing in the early eighties was working on its policy and programme. In his address to the 1981 conference Manley had enunciated the party's continuing belief in democratic socialism and had declared that, in the future, economic policy should be given priority. At that moment a future PNP government seemed to be a long way off and little serious work was done. The party's capture of the lead in the opinion polls in October 1982 took the leadership by surprise and led the 1983 conference to reconstitute the economic affairs commission first established after the break with the IMF. That was effectively all that had been done when Seaga seized the opportunity of a brief surge of popularity following his vigorous support for the U.S. invasion of Grenada to call a snap election for December 1983, even though to do so was in breach of an unofficial bipartisan agreement to await the preparation of

a new electoral register (Payne, forthcoming). The PNP was thereby put on the spot. The national executive committee hastily convened to debate the question of contesting the election. Some members felt that the party had a good chance of increasing its representation in parliament even on the old lists and were ready to take up the challenge. However, the majority, including Manley, were opposed to participating.

Their argument was both principled and pragmatic. On the first count, the calling of the election abrogated the inter-party agreement on electoral reform, and the party had made clear on several occasions that it would not take part in an election on such terms. On the second count, the PNP knew that it had been disadvantaged by Seaga's ploy. Candidates were not selected, policy was unrefined, to say the least, and, as we have seen, funds were short. In addition, Stone's (1982) polls showed the PNP, which has always appealed more to youth, to have a commanding lead among 18-20 year olds, precisely the group that would be disenfranchised by using the 1980 voter lists. In short, the party feared being drawn into an election it could not win, perhaps in any case recognising its own lack of preparedness for government, and preferred the retreat of an official boycott. Polling day thus came and went with the JLP's sixty candidates declared victorious, having only been opposed in six constituencies by independents.

The 1983 "non-election" shaped the parameters of party politics thereafter. The JLP's fortunes were not revived. As the country's economic problems deteriorated, it again found itself relegated to a poor second position in the polls. Divisions in the leadership worsened, many JLP leaders privately feeling that Seaga had damaged the very structure of Jamaican democracy by his electoral maneuver. For its part, the PNP was considerably revitalised by the election issue and has since made the call

for the holding of "proper" elections its main theme, especially once the new register was ready. What is revealing, though, is that, for all its angry rhetoric on the matter, it seems ready to await its moment, as chosen by Seaga, in the normal course of a five-year term dating from December 1983. It has worked hard since 1980 to divorce itself from the extra-parliamentary left in Jamaica and has not wanted its image tarnished by any suggestion of an attachment to quasi-revolutionary politics. In January 1985, for example, when protests against the JLP's economic policies turned into two days of violent demonstrations, the PNP was as keen as the government to get people off the streets and back into conventional politics, strongly disassociating itself from the WPJ in so doing (Payne, 1985). Despite the appalling collapse of the Jamaican economy and deteriorating social conditions, the ethos of restraint that has characterised the political battle since October 1980 has been maintained.

CONCLUSION

These concluding remarks can be brief. The most important point has been made in the account of the evolution of the Jamaican multi-party system through its various stages: it has survived for over forty years. It has changed in character and experienced its crises, but it has survived. More remarkably, perhaps, so have the two parties--the PNP and JLP--which shaped it in the forties. They will contest another election some time before December 1988. The PNP will appeal to the people more on the basis of its commitment to the politics of "democracy" (as revealed in its principled stand on the issue of the electoral register) than the economics of

"socialism" (which remain scarcely more specific in their revised form than they were in 1983 when the party's economic commission was assigned the task of formulation). The JLP will make the best of the poor record of the economy during its period in office and will attempt to tar the PNP once more with the communist brush. The PNP will probably win; the JLP will probably accept the result; and party politics in Jamaica will probably continue.

REFERENCES

Bradley, P. 1960. "Mass Parties in Jamaica: Structure and Organization." Social and Economic Studies 9 (3): 375-416.

Daily Gleaner. 9 October 1977.

Eaton, G. E. 1975. Alexander Bustamante and Modern Jamaica. Kingston: Kingston Publishers Ltd.

Jamaica Daily News. 16 September 1974.

Lacey, T. 1977. Violence and Politics in Jamaica 1960-70. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Manley, M. 1975. A Voice at the Workplace. London: Andre Deutsch.

Manley, M. 1982. Jamaica: Struggle in the Periphery. London: Third World Media Ltd.

Miller, M. 1981. "A Comparative Content Analysis of the Issue Content of the 1967 and 1976 General Elections in Jamaica," in Stone, C. and Browne, A. (eds.) Perspectives on Jamaica in the Seventies. Kingston: Kingston Publishing House.

Munroe, T. 1972. The Politics of Constitutional Decolonization: Jamaica 1944-62. Kingston: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies.

Munroe, T. 1974. "The New Political Situation." Socialism 1: 2-10.

Nettleford, R. (ed.) 1971. Manley and the New Jamaica. London: Longman Caribbean.

Payne, A. J. 1980. The Politics of the Caribbean Community 1961-79: Regional Integration Amongst New States. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

Payne, A. J. 1985. "Violence and Protest in Jamaica." The Round Table 295: 256-62.

Payne, A. J. Forthcoming. Politics in Jamaica. London: Christopher Hurst.

Post, K. W. J. 1978. Arise Ye Starvelings. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Robertson, P. D. 1972. "Party 'Organization' in Jamaica." Social and Economic Studies 21 (1): 30-43.

Stephens, E. H. and J. D. Stephens. 1986. Democratic Socialism in Jamaica. London: Macmillan.

Stone, C. 1973. Class, Race and Political Behaviour in Urban Jamaica. Kingston: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies.

Stone, C. 1974. Electoral Behaviour and Public Opinion in Jamaica. Kingston: Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of the West Indies.

Stone, C. 1980. Democracy and Clientelism in Jamaica. New Brunswick: Transaction Books.

Stone, C. 1982. The Political Opinions of the Jamaican People. Kingston: Jamaica Publishing House.

Waters, A. M. 1985. Race, Class and Political Symbols: Rastafari and Reggae in Jamaican Politics. New Brunswick: Transaction Books.