

Jamaica—Young and Free

THE island of Jamaica in the Caribbean is very much a part of the western hemisphere, even though it belonged to Britain—according to spokesmen who were guests at a faculty dinner at the Henry George School in New York on March 30th.

By 1962, under the impetus of the People's National party, half the island had been revalued for land value taxation, and thousands of home owners were relieved of taxation on improvements and crops as a result. The work would have proceeded to the remaining parishes which include the denser city populations, but the country gained its independence, the People's party was defeated, and revaluations halted.

Half the island is therefore still under a system which is hundreds of years old. This presents a great dilemma, and it was believed there was no choice but to go back and complete the proposed land value reform.

George Collins, a member of the faculty at New York headquarters, and vice president of the Jamaica Progressive League, acting as moderator, introduced first, Fitzroy Fraser, a writer and educator, who was concerned about education for Jamaica—especially a curriculum less concerned with the classical, traditional British pattern, and more concerned with Jamaica itself. He said the need for education is so great they cannot afford to keep the schools locked three months a year and operating only a few hours a day. He hopes for great changes in ten years from the mass of people under 40 who are still uneducated.

Aubrey Russell, a doctor educated at McGill University in Canada, is making a valuable contribution in the field of nutrition. Since the terrain is very uneven, experiments must be made to determine its best yield. He has planted

trees and bought sheep in an effort to make use of the hillsides. How to bring about a balance of trade is one of Jamaica's pressing problems, this speaker said. He expressed a firm belief in the private enterprise system. The people want freedom but are bound by economic difficulties, said Dr. Russell, who believed the greatest trouble was a shortage of dollars. Another spokesman, however, Dr. Earl Johnson, believed money is not necessary to develop a country—you can barter internationally for the things you need.

Vincent Johnston, an engineer, echoed the desire for education, and said, "I know my country, and every other country, needs young men who will start from scratch. They will get help in Jamaica, but they will have to accept the problems of independence.

"We can make it," he said with confidence. "Jamaicans take politics very seriously." He believes in the P.N.P. as one party that did something for the people, especially by putting land value taxation in practice. He hopes many American tourists will come, also that many American firms will invest. "One day our story will be told," he said, "not a very bright story but a good one."

