

West Indian students march

Protest government method

Recent Jamaican student unrest was not, as alleged, entirely concerned with the dismissal of university professor Walter Rodney, according to Miss Betty Milligan. Miss Milligan is the Atlantic Region secretary for the Student Christian Movement of Canada. She made the statement following her recent return from the troubled country. Miss Milligan told SCM members Friday that it was in protest to the methods used by the government in banning him from Jamaica two weeks ago.

"Dr. Rodney was attending the black writers conference at McGill. When he returned to Jamaica, the authorities refused to let him off the plane," she said.

"By correct procedures, the government should have given him a hearing in Jamaica to establish whether or not there were any grounds for barring him from the country.

"Besides barring him, the government gave no reasons for doing so. Students felt that if the government was going to interfere, it should do it legally and openly."

Dr. Rodney was returning to Jamaica to take up the first chair of African black history at the University of the West Indies.

"Dr. Rodney was a close follower of Stokely Carmichael. He was concerned with the illiteracy, unemployment and poverty of the Jamaican people," said Miss Milligan.

"He felt it was time for a Cuba-type revolution in Jamaica. During the summer he travelled around Jamaica gathering support.

"He gained many followers from the Rastafarians. Some of them believe in radical action."

The Rastafarians are a Jamaican sect who believe Haile Selassie is God and are awaiting his invitation to them asking them to come to the promised land, Ethiopia.

"Since the government and people of Jamaica are conservative and have a great fear of Cuba, Jamaican agents followed Rodney around Jamaica. That's why they refused him entry, although they never said so," said Miss Milligan.

"The guild of undergraduate students and the West Indian Union of University teachers met and decided to protest the government's action."

"On the day of the protest 400 students showed up to march from the university to the home affairs office where they were going to demand a hearing from the minister."

"As the march progressed 700-800 striking workers joined the march. They were protesting against the government too, but on a different plane than the students."

"The march got out of hand and rioting and looting broke out. The students decided to disperse before the march reached the home office and there was no hearing.

"Later the prime minister made a statement blaming the students for wilful destruction and all of the rioting and looting. The government took over the entrances of the university and prohibited any movement on or off campus."

"They strung barbed wire

across the entrances and stationed soldiers and machine guns there."

She said the question now is the autonomy of the university.

"The government says that the University of the West Indies and non-Jamaican students and faculty have no right to incite and demonstrate in Jamaica," she said.

"The Trinidad and Barbados campuses of UWI support the Jamaican campus. The actions of non-Jamaicans is a reflection of the feeling on the smaller islands. The government says that a regional university shouldn't get involved in national affairs."

Miss Milligan said the prime minister used nationalism and the communist scare to get the people's support.

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