

POLITICS in an ISLAND STATE



Wills O. Isaacs
and Jamaica's Struggle for Development

Diane Austin-Broos

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Jamaica is most well-known for its popular culture, crime and violence. Government, the state, is viewed as a malign force. In *Politics in an Island State* noted anthropologist Diane Austin-Broos brings an alternative view of Jamaica, its culture and governance. This history of Jamaica, and more pointedly, the history of politics in Jamaica, is brilliantly told through the biography of Wills O. Isaacs. Never the leader of his party – the People's National Party – Wills was active in politics from the 1930s and was nonetheless a prominent and notorious figure.

Informative and entertaining, this biography of a “second-tier” political leader departs from the usual heroic style and addresses the challenges of a fledgling social democracy in the mid-twentieth century. Decolonization and the decline of sugar, the Great Depression and two world wars frame the challenges of the time. Flanked by rural-to-urban migration, unemployment and industrialization, Jamaica's struggles into the twenty-first century and the conduct of government – the successes, failures and foibles – are presented and viewed through a more nuanced lens.

Leaders shape history, though they seldom dictate its direction. Viewing history through their eyes affords a dynamic account of the structures and events that underpin a society's development. *Politics in an Island State* will find a ready audience with readers generally interested in the Caribbean, but even more so with sages – both academic and unconventional – of anthropology, history, foreign affairs, sociology, political science, development studies and political economy.

Diane Austin-Broos is professor emerita of anthropology at the University of Sydney, and an elected fellow of Australia's Social Science Academy and of the Royal Society of New South Wales. Her research addresses both Jamaica and Central Australia focusing on economy and change, and women and religion. Her publications include *Urban Life in Kingston Jamaica (1984; 2018)*; *A Different Inequality (2012)*; *Arrente Present, Arrente Past (2009)* and *Jamaica Genesis (1997)*.

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