

The men who would be prime minister

One week after Bruce Golding's bombshell announcement that he will be stepping down as party leader and prime minister, the leadership of the Jamaica Labour Party (JLP) is pulling out all the stops to ensure a transition devoid of rancour and one that will not disrupt unity in a party with a history of internal squabbles.

While efforts are reportedly underway to have a coronation rather than an election of a new prime minister, there are questions as to whether those attempts will bear fruit as reports swirl of near fist-fights and overt hostility between the various factions as the party debates the assets and liabilities of some of the key figures being eyed as possible replacements. While the final decision will be left to the 5,000 delegates of the party, some members of the public who are paying close attention to the developments are also debating whether the party should go with a young leader or a seasoned campaigner. Those reportedly eying the top spot are Deputy Leader and the country's Finance Minister Audley Shaw; Education Minister Andrew Holness; and Industry and Commerce Minister Dr Christopher Tufton, who is also one of the party's four deputy leaders. There are also reports that party chairman and Transport and Works Minister Mike Henry may be interested, as well as former chairman and current Foreign Affairs Minister Dr Ken Baugh. Party insiders have also said that Agriculture Minister and Deputy Chairman of the party Robert Montague is being encouraged to enter the contest. Already, well-placed Labourites are scrutinising the credentials of the aspirants and are adamant that the ideal winner should be able to demonstrate the extent to which he can run the country as well as hold the sometimes fragile party together. Here is a brief synopsis of each of the contenders, one of whom will become Jamaica's ninth prime minister in November. Audley Shaw — 'Man a yard' Audley Shaw, the member of parliament for North Eastern Manchester, was born on June 13, 1952 and was educated at Northern Illinois University where he earned Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts degrees in Journalism with graduate studies in Marketing, Finance and Public Relations. He has been an MP since 1993 when he defeated the People's National Party's (PNP's) Kenneth Neita. He was among eight JLP candidates to win their seats in what was then a landslide victory by the PJ Patterson-led PNP. In 1989, Shaw was appointed by then leader of the Opposition, Edward Seaga, to the Senate and served as shadow minister of information and culture, shadow minister of public utilities and transport, as well as shadow minister of industry and commerce. In 1997, he was appointed the shadow minister of finance, and following the party's success in the 2007 general elections he was handed the finance and the public service ministry, albeit with the assistance of two other ministers, Dwight Nelson who was later shifted to the National Security Ministry and businessman Don Wehby, who served as minister without portfolio for two years before returning to GraceKennedy. Shaw, a deputy leader of the party since 1999, has also served as JLP general secretary. Shaw has received harsh criticisms for introducing a \$18-b tax package in 2009 and for returning to Parliament with multiple supplementary budgets. He was also drawn over the coals when he declared that Jamaica would not be adversely affected by the global financial meltdown. However, the affable but sometimes strident politician, affectionately called 'man a yard', has bounced back admirably, according to some commentators who have cited him as one of the better performers inside the Golding cabinet. His major achievements include his success in lowering interest rates, aggressive efforts to rein in tax dodgers and a successful introduction of a debt exchange, which many say prevented Jamaica from buckling under the effects of the global financial meltdown. Shaw has also been credited for his role in negotiating a standby loan arrangement with the International Monetary Fund.

However, he has been chided on occasions for his less-than-thoughtful utterances, particularly on political platforms, and has also been criticised for the Finance Ministry's handling of the public sector wage deal. Andrew Holness — Seaga's protégé Andrew Holness was born on July 22, 1972. He attended St Catherine High School and the University of the West Indies where he specialised in Development Economics. Holness, who was groomed by Edward Seaga, has been Member of Parliament for St Andrew West Central since March 26, 1998 following a contested election result which was only resolved after the intervention of the Constituted Authority. Between 1999 and 2002, Holness served as Opposition Spokesman for Land and Development and in 2002 was asked by Seaga to serve as the Opposition Spokesman for Housing. In 2005, he was transferred to shadow the education portfolio, a role he performed until 2007 when he was ushered in as education minister following the 2007 general elections. As education minister, Holness has received commendation on his far-reaching policies such as his tough stance on security and safety in schools, his push to achieve 100 per cent literacy at the primary level and his emphasis on accountability at all levels of the education system. However, he has had somewhat of a rough time with one of the key stakeholder groups in the education system, the Jamaica Teachers' Association (JTA) which has, on several occasions, argued that he doesn't engage in consultations before making crucial decisions. Holness has also been said by the JTA to be 'anti-teacher', an argument which he has rejected. In Parliament, Holness is the leader of government business and in his party he serves as the chairman of the public relations committee. Dr Kenneth Baugh — The Elder Statesman Dr Kenneth Baugh, a consultant surgeon, was born in Montego Bay, St James on February 24, 1941 and was educated at Cornwall College and the University of the West Indies. Dr Baugh served as member of parliament for North West St James between 1980 and 1987 and as minister of health from 1980 to 1989 during the Edward Seaga administration. He also served as an Opposition senator from 1989 to 1993. He was selected by the JLP to contest the St Catherine West Central seat in 1997 and has held on to the seat since then. Dr Baugh is currently the minister of foreign affairs and foreign trade, and deputy prime minister. He is viewed as a respected parliamentarian and statesman. Mike Henry — The Veteran Michael Henry, an author and publisher by profession, was born in Spanish Town, St Catherine in June 1935 and was educated at Beckford & Smith (now St Jago High School) and Ealing Technical College (UK). He

entered representational politics in 1976 as the JLP's candidate for Central Clarendon. After losing that election, he bounced back in 1980 and has been successful in every parliamentary election since then. In the Seaga administration of the 1980s, Henry served as a minister of state for information. Henry is presently the chairman of the JLP and is also the minister of transport and works, presiding over the multi-billion-dollar Jamaica Development Infrastructure Programme, the biggest infrastructural programme in the country's history. Henry has been an ardent lobbyist for the return of the passenger rail service and in April of this year successfully orchestrated the return of limited rail service between Spanish Town and Linstead. He has also consistently argued in Parliament for reparation for the descendants of slaves.

Robert Montague — Street-smart Politician The 46-year-old Robert Montague was born in St Mary where he attended St Mary High School before going to the College of Agriculture in Portland where he graduated as an agronomist. Montague is a banana farmer, and a former chief agro-consultant for two overseas companies. He served as a councillor and chairman of the St Mary Parish Council from July 2003 to September 2007 when he was elected member of parliament for Western St Mary. Prime Minister Golding then appointed him minister of state with responsibility for Local Government, a position he held until July 1 this year when he was promoted to head the agriculture and fisheries ministry. Known as a tough street-wise politician, Montague learnt the art of politics from older heads in the profession and has developed a reputation as a no-nonsense legislator. In November 2010, Montague was successful in his bid to become deputy chairman of the JLP.

Dr Christopher Tufton — The Performer Dr Christopher Tufton, the 43-year-old member of parliament for South West St Elizabeth, was educated at the University of the West Indies, the University of Atlanta and the Manchester Business School in London where he pursued a Doctorate in Business Administration. Tufton is a former lecturer in the Department of Management Studies at the University of the West Indies. A former chairman of the National Democratic Movement (NDM), Tufton is among several members of the current administration who followed Bruce Golding back into the JLP in 2002. He was elected president of the JLP's young professional group, Generation 2000 (G2K). After winning his seat in 2007, Tufton was named agriculture minister and made a quick impact, scoring a raft of successes in the sector and raising the profile of agriculture. He oversaw the divestment of state-owned sugar factories and introduced farmers' markets across the country in response to overproduction of agricultural produce. In July this year, Golding reshuffled his Cabinet and made Tufton the minister of industry, investment and commerce. One of his first major moves was the placement of a ban on the export of scrap metals, in response to the widescale theft of public and private property by persons in the scrap metal trade. Two prominent political commentators have added their voices to the slew of analysts eyeing the developments in the Labour party. Troy Cain, a political historian, is of the view that most of the names being bandied about as potential leaders of the JLP are highly qualified and have demonstrated an ability to deliver. Cain maintains that the JLP, at this time, has a better cadre of leadership aspirants when compared with those in the PNP who are lining up to take over the leadership of that party when the time comes. Cain was, however, reluctant to comment specifically on the individuals who could enter the JLP leadership race. But on a local radio talk-show on Friday, veteran commentator Shalman Scott examined the credentials of some of those whose names are being called. "Andrew is a hard worker, who like Peter Phillips, like PJ Patterson, like Bruce Golding is being groomed for national leadership," he said. "My issue is the timing. One of the things I do is to look at the relationship between a minister and his immediate constituents, for example the minister of agriculture with the farmers, the minister of education with the teachers, and the question that I keep asking myself is, which teacher who voted for the Jamaica Labour Party in 2007 will go back and vote for Labour because of Andrew Holness when the next election comes?" His reference was to the highly publicised spats between the education minister and the JTA. "Tufton is a hard worker. I think even at this moment he is demonstrating much more political savvy than Andrew Holness. Two mistakes by Holness within less than a week: the visit at Brady's house (is one). The second one has to do with his own response to the display of his popularity at the prime minister's mother's funeral. "Tufton is showing that he has more political acumen. Tufton is saying the right things, seems to work things out in a better way and is less capricious. For example, when he said, 'if my political ambition is going to affect the Labour party, I am prepared to put my ambition on the back burner', now, that is sensible politics," said Scott, who then raised concerns regarding the extent to which Tufton's role in the NDM will be considered by the delegates of the JLP. As it relates to Ken Baugh, Scott says "he would put a brake on the overall decline in the charitable opinion that the Jamaican people have of the Jamaica Labour Party, especially in light of the developments over the past year-and-a-half, relative to the Manatt/Coke issue and other related matters. He is known to be a level-headed political person whose integrity I have not heard questioned. Those are some of the elements that the Labour Party needs at this point in time. In terms of liability, he is not in for the rough and tumble of the politics out in the trenches," Scott reasoned. Scott described Audley Shaw as a hard worker, who has several assets and indicated that Mike Henry, who in the past had challenged then party leader Edward Seaga, has had ambitions of becoming prime minister of Jamaica for the longest time. Source: Jamaica Observer