71-15,112

CARROLL, William Edward, 1943-
THE END OF SLAVERY: IMPERIAL POLICY AND COLONIAL REACTION IN BRITISH GUIANA.

The University of Michigan, Ph.D., 1970
History, modern

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THE END OF SLAVERY: IMPERIAL POLICY AND COLONIAL REACTION IN BRITISH GUIANA

by
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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
(History)
in The University of Michigan
1970

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ABSTRACT

THE END OF SLAVERY: IMPERIAL POLICY AND
COLONIAL REACTION IN BRITISH GUIANA

by
William Edward Carroll

Chairman: Gerald S. Brown

The abolition of slavery in the British Empire by an Act of Parliament was a measure of immense significance. Problems of a political, constitutional, social, economic, and psychological nature buffeted Britain's dependent Empire. The story of the end of slavery in British Guiana is at once an integral part of this larger picture as well as a watershed in the history of that small country in northern South America.

The attempts of the British Government, in the 1820's, to ameliorate the condition of the slaves in the West Indies, and thus to prepare them for eventual emancipation, were only partially successful. The planter class in the quasi-autonomous Legislative Colonies was able to thwart, for some time, the wishes of the Colonial Office. In the Crown Colonies, those acquired as a result of the Napoleonic Wars, Orders in Council were more readily implemented. British Guiana was in this latter category, but with some significant qualifications. Under the terms of the 1803 Capitulation, the British guaranteed to the residents of the former Dutch territories of Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice (united into British Guiana in 1831) their "ancient laws and usages." While the Crown, through its official representatives, was technically supreme in matters of public policy in British Guiana,

the right of taxation was vested in a Combined Court controlled by representatives of the planting class. From the early 1800's on the plantocracy used its economic and constitutional prerogatives in an attempt to secure political, economic, and social concessions from the British Government.

The exigencies of a newly emancipated society -- the result of the legal termination of the servile status of almost ninety per cent of the colonial population -- required a significant expansion in the functions of government. The constitutional crises of 1835 and 1840 -- just one aspect of the series of adjustments that faced Guiana after emancipation -- were directly related to the government's increased need for funds and the refusal of the Combined Court to grant them. It was only through the mediation of a third party, despatched by the Colonial Office, that a compromise was reached guaranteeing certain constitutional privileges to the Combined Court and the allowance of the planters' demand for large scale immigration that the impasse was overcome.

Emancipation ended the slave status of the laboring population, a system of forced labor upon which the planters depended for the profitable cultivation of sugar cane. Many emancipated Blacks left their former estates and became independent freeholders. The planters, witnessing the loss of a portion of their labor force and the end of the system of coercion which had insured some return on their investment, feared economic ruin. The Imperial Government blocked their attempts to frame strict vagrancy and contract laws. The planters were faced with the rather uncomfortable situation of having to deal with a free labor market. Rather than come to terms with their former

slaves, they sought, through the immigration of "Hill Coolies" from India, a new, tractable labor force. The British Government, badgered by humanitarian elements at home, was at first reticent to approve an undertaking which might appear to be a revival of slavery. After safeguards were assured, and pressure applied from Georgetown through the financial power of the Combined Court, London finally approved the immigration scheme.

The planters were severely shaken, in a psychological sense, by the emancipation of their slaves. The colonists were convinced that they were the victims of a vast anti-colonial conspiracy hatched by the Whigs, humanitarians, missionaries, and free traders, who had systematically set out to ruin them. The social order, defined by slavery and of which they had been the apex, was rent asunder, and the planters scrambled to pick up the pieces. For a variety of reasons, imperial and colonial, economic and political, social and psychological, the planters did emerge triumphant in the post-emancipation years. But their ascendancy was in a setting not of their own creation and as part of a social order alien to their preconceptions.

Dedication

In my brief tenure as a teacher at the University of Michigan I have met so many outstanding individuals. I have been very fortunate to have had such fine students. Their intellectual curiosity and freshness of thought have reaffirmed my commitment to a life of teaching and scholarship and it is to them that I dedicate this dissertation.

Most especially, however, I wish to dedicate this work to Steve Baldner -- philosopher, theologian, tennis partner, good friend.

PREFACE

I want to take this opportunity to formally express my gratitude to the Department of History of the University of Michigan for the generous financial support which has enabled me to complete successfully the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Without such aid it would have been impossible for me to have pursued a graduate program in history. Their fellowship support and that of the Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies has enabled me to do research in London and the West Indies.

My five years at Michigan have been most enjoyable, and I am grateful for the assistance that I received from so many people. At this time I wish to thank the members of my doctoral committee, Professors Broomfield, Gibson, and Park for their assistance. But most of all, I wish to thank Professor Gerald Brown, my chairman, for his encouragement and help throughout my entire graduate career. He has been most generous with his time and advice, for which I will always be appreciative.

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Gold

Girls wear on their wrists the gold
That Raleigh dreamed of:
El Dorado glints in your eyes:
Hints of the water between gravel
And pan: dust of a ground mountain's
Dream. Men have died angry,
Screaming the guts of their power, lusting the bright
Stone. History drowned your flesh here in a mesh
Of brown rivers: the pirates have gone;
The pilots remain on the rivers: watching
Rocks, hearing the cataract whisper
And crack. The gold remains hidden:
The vision of guilt driven deep into under-
Ground silts. But the tips of the roots.
Reaching light, licking green, nourishing
Features of vein, leaves and forest,
Give lips to the secrets of fear.
In the secrets of forests.
Glint falling on leaf, birds' harvests
Of song, flowers' tendrils nourishing
The gloom bloom of blossom, shoots
Of odours in the damp plunder
Of sting, butterfly's wing hidden
Under such rushes of sound, there comes the whisper
Of footsteps, eyes of the past watching
Our journey over the soft fallen bone
Of liana, obstinate thickets. The eyes wear flesh
Rounded by memory out of bright sockets of history;
Their lips silenced by time, conqueror's dust,
Recover their teeth and their consonants; vowels of
Angry Breath break from their lame
Wilted faces; babel
Of leaves cry their warnings the tribe dies
Whose faith of green crumples; love
Of the good soil humbled by its gold.

L. E. Braithwaite

Slavery is an integral part of that "vision of guilt," those "eyes of the past," the eyes "rounded by memory out of bright sockets of history" to which Braithwaite has referred. More than any other institution -- in fact, more than just an 'institution' -- slavery was the lynch-pin of the social order, the fulcrum of communal life in British Guiana. Slavery was the system of forced labor that nourished a plantation monoculture. It was a system of social relationships which guaranteed the ascendancy of a white plantocracy -- a social structure feudal in its patriarchalism. Slavery and the slave experience have indelibly marked the collective and individual histories of the various West Indian societies. The "eyes of the past" weigh heavily upon contemporary Guyana. Economically the country is just beginning an attempt to free itself from the debilitating effects of the almost exclusive reliance on the production of sugar. Politically and socially, Guyana finds itself the heir of a racially and religiously heterogeneous society of the most diverse origins -- European, African, and Asian. Psychologically, the descendants of former slaves are still trying to break loose from the "Sambo" image inculcated in their servile past.

This study is concerned with the end of slavery, in a legal sense, in British Guiana in the late 1830's. It will investigate those crises of adjustment that took place in British Guiana in the years immediately following the abolition of slavery. This period in Guiana's history is of seminal importance as the political, economic, and social structure of the colony was severely shaken. Moreover, the response to these societal tremors introduced new and alien elements into Guiana's social fabric.

Slavery cut across all aspects of life in the colony. Therefore, its legal abolition was equally pervasive. This study will deal, consequently, with the interrelationships between the economic, constitutional, political, social, and psychological ramifications of the termination of slavery in British Guiana.

Chapter I

In Quest of El Dorado: Guiana to 1820

"Yet unspoiled Guiana, whose great city Gergons' sons call El Dorado." This ideological and emotional concept of El Dorado, a city of gold, referred to by John Milton in Paradise Lost, has remained an important element in the ethos of Guyanese historiography. The coast line of South America between the Orinoco and Amazon rivers was first charted in the closing decades of the fifteenth century by Spanish and Portuguese explorers. They were the first Europeans to come into contact with the indigenous Arawak and Carib speaking Amerindian peoples who inhabited the Guyanas. In the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries these initial adventurers were joined by French, English and Dutch navigators in search of plunder and glory -- hoping to find the legendary city of gold.

In 1595 Sir Walter Raleigh visited the area and conceived of a vast English empire stretching from the Amazon to the Orinoco. One year later his book, Discoveries of Guiana, was published, encouraging further expeditions to the coast of northeastern South America:

> The West Indies were first offered Her Majesty's grandfather by Columbus, a stranger, in whom there might be doubt of deceit, and besides it was then thought incredible that there were such and so many islands and regions never written of before. This empire is made known to Her Majesty by her own vassal, and by him that oweth to her more duty than an ordinary subject . . . .
>
> Guiana is a country that hath yet her maidenhead, never sacked, turned, nor wrought, the face of the earth hath not been torn, nor the virtue and salt of the soil spent by manurance, the graves not been opened for gold, the mines not broken with sledges, nor their images pulled down out of their temples . . . . The common soldier shall here fight for gold, and

> pay himself instead of pence, with plates of half a foot broad, whereas he breaketh his bones in other wars for provant and penury. Those commanders and chieftains, that shoot at honour, and abundance, shall find here more rich and beautiful cities, more temples adorned with golden images, more sepulchres filled with treasure, than either Cortez found in Mexico, or Pizarro in Peru . . . .
>
> I never saw a more beautiful country, nor more lively prospects, hills so raised here and there over the valleys, the river winding into divers branches, the plains adjoining without bush or stubble, all fair green grass, the ground of hard sand easy to march on, either for horse or foot, the deer crossing in every path, the birds towards the evening singing on every tree with a thousand different tunes, cranes and herons of white crimson and carnation perching on the river's side, the air fresh with a gentle easterly wind, and every stone that we stopped to take up promised either gold or silver by his [sic] complexion.[1]

With such a generously optimistic, although at times inaccurate, description, by this distinguished explorer, it is no wonder that Raleigh's account encouraged further expeditions to Guyana.

English explorers were not alone. On March 24, 1597 the States General of Amsterdam, which had in 1581 formally renounced allegiance to the King of Spain, granted a commission to a merchant, Hans van der Veken of Rotterdam, for two vessels "manned with Germans and [men of] other nations, to the coasts of Guinea, [in Africa], Peru and West India, and there to trade and bargain with the savages."[2] And on December 15, 1597, permission was granted to Jan Cornelisz. Leyn of Enkhuisen for two ships "to sail to the land of Guiana, situate in the kingdom of Peru." "Het Landt van Guiana gelegen in het Coninckryck van Peru."[3] This is the earliest document showing a Dutch expedition to the Guiana coast. Dutch archives contain the extensive report of A. Cabeliau, a clerk on one of Leyn's ships, who made the voyage to "America Peruana."[4]

The Estates of Zeeland, on November 20, 1599, granted a charter for an enterprise to northern South America. Two ships with sixteen soldiers sailed to do possible damage to the King of Spain. These coastal areas were considered the property of Spain and the presence of soldiers suggests aggressive designs as well as possible plans for the occupation of territory.[5] In 1605 the King of Spain promulgated an edict by which he sought not only to close to Hollanders and Zeelanders the realms of Spain and Portugal, but strictly forbade them to navigate and trade in any part of the Indies, East or West, under penalty of confiscation of property and death.[6]

In response to this, a prominent Dutch merchant, Willem Usselinx published a pamphlet in 1608 entitled: "Exposition, how necessary, useful and profitable it is to the United Netherlands to preserve the freedom of Trading to West Indies, in the Peace [expected] with the King of Spain." The famous Dutch theoretician on international law, Hugo Grotius, published in 1609 his Mare libirum, arguing that Spain had no legal right to a monopoly of the seas nor of trade to the West Indies.[7]

A twelve year truce between Spain and the rebellious Netherlands began in 1609 and under its terms the Dutch were given the freedom to trade, but not the right to found colonies, in Spanish America. The Dutch, however, did establish settlements and Spanish records show that in 1613 Dutch traders were situated along the coast between the Orinoco and Amazon rivers and also on the banks of the Corentyn River.[8]

With the renewal of war in 1621 between Spain and the Netherlands, the Dutch decided to establish a formal company to regulate and protect the technically illegal trade being carried on by Dutch traders in the

American possessions of Spain and Portugal. Willem Usselinx was one of the founders when letters patent, dated 3 June 1621, were issued by the States General to the Geotroyeerde Westindische Compagnie. The Dutch West India Company, under the terms of its charter, was to consist of five "chambers," established in Amsterdam, Zeeland, Rotterdam, the North Department (Friesland and Hoorn), and Gronigen. Each chamber was to be represented on the governing board in proportion to their capital contribution. Thus, Amsterdam had eight directors, Zeeland four, Hoorn two, Friesland two, and Gronigen two, with one director chosen by the States General.[9] The governing body was commonly referred to as "The Nineteen."

The Company received a twenty-four year monopoly on Dutch trade along the coasts of America and Africa between the Tropic of Cancer and the Tropic of Capricorn. The Company was also authorized to establish colonies if it deemed it in its best interests. In general, the policy of "The Nineteen" was to use their monopoly of trade on the coast of Africa in order to secure the cheap and regular supply of Negro labor which was necessary for the profitable exploitation of Company possessions in America.[10] The Dutch West India Company had the right to make war and conclude treaties and it had to pay a fixed share of its profits to the States General.

To encourage agricultural development in the Guianas, the Company, in 1629, issued a charter of privileges and exemptions according to which any member of the Company might obtain a tract of unoccupied land extending sixteen miles along the sea coast or on one side of a navigable river, or eight miles along both banks of a navigable river, "an so far into the country as the situation of the occupiers will

permit," by purchasing such land from the Amerindians. The founder of such an estate was called a "patroon." Each patroon received his estate in perpetuity and each colonist paid him a fixed rent, usually in kind. The patroon was the legal heir of all his tenant-colonists who died intestate. He was granted full civil and criminal jurisdiction within the boundaries of his estate. The patroon had the right to create offices, found cities and name magistrates.[11]

The first mention of such colonizing activities can be found in the November 26, 1626, minutes of the Zeeland Chamber:

> The committee on wares is authorized to make up a suitable cargo to the Amazon for the yacht Arnemuyden . . . .
>
> Resolved, to send with the aforesaid yacht Arnemuyden twenty ripening youths, in order to land them in the Amazon, the Wiapoco [now Oyapock], or the Essequibo -- wherever the folk of our Chamber may be found -- for the purpose of being employed there. And each of them shall be granted two, three or four guilders a month, according to their capacities.[12]

In 1627 this same Chamber granted a charter to Abraham van Pere and sixty colonists to build a fort on the Berbice River, "to carry on their trade with the natives of the land, to fell forests, sow, plant, seek minerals, and, in general, to do all other things which they shall judge good and profitable for their colony; also to explore other neighbouring rivers and transfer themselves thither, if they should think to find better profit there."[13] Van Pere, as patroon, left on July 31, 1627, and on arriving in Guiana he built Fort Nassau on the Berbice River.

Trade on the Berbice prospered and on May 14, 1637, "Confrater van Pere was authorized to turn over two kegs of syrup, or sap of sugar-cane, arrived from Essequibo from Jan van der Goes, to

Sr. Segers, in order that he may try to reduce it to sugar."[14] It was not, however, until 1664 that the first sugar mill was established in Guiana, at Brouwershoek, on the north bank of the mingled Cuyuni and Mazaruni Rivers, near their junction with the Essequibo.[15] The Cuyuni and Mazaruni merge at a point called Katarbu Point and a small island off this point was called Kijk-over-al ("Look over all") by the Dutch settlers. The seat of the government of the territory called Essequibo was located on this island. On February 21, 1639, the Zeeland Chamber granted Jan van der Goes the rank of "Commandeur," signifying his position as the principal officer of the Company in charge of the Essequibo settlement.[16] This is the beginning of organized government in Guiana.

However distant these early activities, and those to be discussed subsequently, appear to be from the central concern of this study, it is important to trace, in some detail, the historic roots of the rather strange system of government which was eventually inherited by the British.

The Treaty of Munster, 30 January 1648, recognized the independence of the rebellious Netherlands. The King of Spain and the States-General were to remain in possession "of such lordships, towns, castles, fortresses, commerce and country" in the East and West Indies, in Brazil and on the coasts of Asia, Africa, and America as they respectively held in possession in 1648.[17] By this treaty the Dutch positions on the Berbice River with Fort Nassau and on the Essequibo River with Fort Kijk-over-al were formally acknowledged. These two settlements were thus recognized, not only by the King of Spain, but

by the international community, as Dutch colonies. From this point, until their union in 1831, Berbice and Essequibo have a separate existence and identity.

The charter of the Dutch West India Company was renewed in 1647 for twenty-five years, but with the advent of peace its main source of revenue, privateering, came to an end. The Company's resources were further drained in an unsuccessful effort to maintain their claim to Brazil. In 1656 the Zeeland Chamber took steps to encourage colonization to the "Wild Coast." Colonists, in return for grants of land, had to agree to buy all their supplies from the Zeeland Chamber and ship all their produce there. This venture, initiated by Zeeland, was still under the sovereignty of the States-General and the authority of the West India Company. To facilitate this colonization the Zeeland Chamber entered into a contract with the three most important trading towns of Zeeland, the Walcheren cities of Middleburg, Vlissingen and Vere, "to establish and plant colonies on the continental Wild Coast." These cities were granted "high, middle and low jurisdiction in order the better to maintain the necessary authority over their subordinates." A managing committee was established, a director appointed and a ship embarked from Vlissingen in February 1658 to the newly rechristened territory of "Nova Zeelandia."[18] This new band of settlers did not go to the Essequibo, but established themselves on the Pomeroon River, further to the west.

By the end of 1663 the magnitude of the venture had increased so much that the three cities were financially unable, especially with the onset of war, to carry on alone. Nevertheless, in the previous

six years colonists had flowed in and the slave trade prospered. Lieutenant-General Byam, Governor of the adjacent British colony of Surinam, wrote in 1665 that Guiana was the greatest of all the Dutch possessions in America.[19] The Pomeroon district was by then an established district of the Colony of Essequibo, and, as noted above, the completion of a sugar mill at Brouwershoek in 1664, illustrated the agricultural growth in the Essequibo valley.

International politics and economic rivalry were to take their toll in the affairs of Guiana. The two great Puritan Republics, England and the Netherlands, had much in common ideologically, but their rivalry in world commerce produced emnity. The long Dutch War for Independence had been a period of extraordinary economic expansion. Geography provided an inestimatable advantage. With a network of waterways tied to the German hinterland, the Dutch merchants were the heirs of a vast trading system which had once belonged to Genoa and Venice. In the course of the war the Dutch had conquered Protuguese [Portugal was under Spanish rule] possessions in Asia (Java and Sumatra), and in America (portions of Brazil, later returned).[20] "Their East India Company, founded at the same time as its English counterpart, was by the middle of the century twenty times as rich. Dutch shipping carried three-fourths of the produce of the world, and half the world's ocean-going vessels were built at Saardam. Amsterdam became the central money-market of Europe, with fabulous reserves of gold in its famous vaults."[21]

Oligarchy in the 1650's was triumphant in both England and the Netherlands, yet commercial rivalry made peace impossible. The British Navigation Act of 1651 forbade the importing of foreign goods

in any but English bottoms or those of the country of origin. This meant economic hardship for the Dutch carrying-trade. Protests increased in vehemence and eventually a naval incident led to the first Anglo-Dutch War. Their geographic position and lack of centralized direction led to disaster for the Dutch.[22] An inconclusive peace was agreed to in 1654 between Cromwell's England and the Netherlands, but the lingering embers of commercial rivalry remained.

The economic recovery of the Dutch people was as remarkable as it was rapid. Their commerce regained its old ascendancy within a decade and English and Dutch crews were constantly involved in brawls and 'incidents' in the harbors of the world. Newly installed King Charles II was not averse to fighting both his commercial and ideological rivals. War officially broke out again in 1665. It was, as in the previous decade, a naval war fought in both hemispheres. The war went badly, at first, for the Dutch but gradually they gained the upper hand -- early in 1667 they sailed, unopposed, up the Thames, and for a period of two days, attacked the naval base at Chatham, burning ships and towing away others.[23]

A decidedly minor operation of this war took place in the winter of 1665 when a British force from Barbados, headed by a Major John Scott, attacked the Pomeroon settlement. It fell easily and its fort was destroyed. The British moved on to the Essequibo, seized Fort Kijk-over-al, left a small garrison and returned to Barbados in April 1666. The French, honoring their defensive alliance with the Netherlands, blockaded the British garrisons in Essequibo. The British, eventually were forced to surrender to Matthijs Bergenaar, Commandeur of Berbice.

The Dutch colonies were inextricably intertwined in the world wide struggle for commercial superiority between the Dutch and the English and the Guiana settlements were rudely awakened to this fact. The Second Anglo-Dutch War came to an end with the Peace of Breda signed on 31 July 1667. The Dutch were left in possession of all their settlements in Guiana.[24]

In 1670 the Zeeland Chamber of the West India Company sent Hendrick Rol to be Commandeur at Kijk-over-al. Commandeur Rol, with the assistance of a Secretary and six other servants of the Company, took care of the administrative affairs of the Colony. The West India Company, increasingly finding diminishing returns from its widespread ventures, was obliged in 1674 to go into liquidation. The States-General in September 1674 granted a charter to a new Dutch West India Company with considerably reduced territorial limits. Instead of the entire coast of America, the new company was only granted control over the Essequibo and the Pomeroon colonies.[25]

In April 1675 the new West India Company issued a code of laws, known as the Articled Letter, under which the Colony was to be administered. The contents of these instructions are interesting for the style of life they reflected. The length of tenure for servants of the Company was fixed at four years. The servants of the Company were not permitted to engage in any private trade or business. The possession of dice or cards was strictly forbidden. A fine was imposed for curses, oaths, blasphemy or mockery, and anyone absent from morning or evening prayers without sufficient cause was also liable to a fine. Numerous attempts were made "to make the punishment fit the crime." For example, it was provided that: "whoever shall

draw a knife with intent to stab another shall be fastened by the knife through his hand to the mast and left there to free himself. Whoever shall wound another shall be keel-hauled and lose a month's wages. If anyone shall murder another, he shall be tied to the corpse and with it thrown overboard, and all his wages and price-money shall be forefeited."[26] It is interesting to note that while these guidelines are comparable to ships' articles, they were used to govern the Colony. This is understandable in light of the fact that the early Commandeurs, like Hendrick Rol, were captains of ships.

With the death of Commandeur Rol at Kijk-over-al in 1676 the Company selected Abraham Beekman as his successor, "in the name and on behalf of Their High Mightinesses the States-General, the Prince of Orange, and the West India Company." Commandeur Beekman was "earnestly recommended to take care that the religion adopted by the public authorities in these territories be maintained as far as possible in its usual form, at the fort and in the ships, and that the inhabitants of the country, as well as their children, are brought through a holy life into the knowledge of God and the true reformed religion."[27] The settlement still clustered around Fort Kijk-over-al for protection, especially from raids by Carib Indians. Despite occasional threats to their security both from the Indians and the British, agriculture increased and a growing trade in annatto dye had developed.[28] In the last decade of the seventeenth century the Company's plantations had become important enough for each to require a manager. These managers together with the Commandeur and the Secretary constituted a Council or Raad. The Raad met from time to time as a Court of Justice or to consider the Company's affairs. The "free

planters" had no voice in such matters and did not attend the meetings of the Raad. The records of the Company list forty-three men in its service in Essequibo in 1691. The reports for 1701 included new trading posts and gave the total European population of the Colony, including "free settlers", as sixty-seven. No formal count of slaves was undertaken until the imposition of a head tax of two and one-half guilders for each slave held by private (non-Company) planters. These slaves numbered, in 1700, about nine hundred.[29] The income from the tax was not at all sufficient to pay for most of the expenses of the Colony. The main source of revenue came from the produce of the Company's plantations and the profit derived from the Indian trade.[30]

In the last of the great wars associated with the reign of Louis XIV, the War of the Spanish Succession, England and the Netherlands were allied against France. In the Fall of 1708, Captain Antoine Ferry, a French privateer, plundered the Essequibo settlements and forced Kijk-over-al to surrender and to pay a large ransom. In February of 1709 two more French privateers sailed up the Essequibo River attacking plantations.[31] The destructive nature of these attacks ruined most of the private planters. The sixty years since the signing of the Treaty of Munster had been a period of uneven development. European politics and international war had taken a heavy toll in the agricultural and economic progress of the Colony. Despite numerous foreign raids and destructive attacks the settlements were able to recover and grow in size. The development which took place in these years gives evidence of the significant economic and agricultural potential of the area.

The administrative structure of the Essequibo Council was slightly changed in 1718. It was now designated as the "Raad van Politie en Justitie" (Council of Policy and Justice). The private planters, who now numbered fifteen, were still not represented.[32] Ultimate authority was vested in the Directors of the Company who sent out detailed instructions on almost all matters.

Facilities at Kijk-over-al were so small that in 1716 a Colony House for the administrator, Huis Nabij, was constructed on the Mazaruni side of the point formed by the junction with the Cuyuni River. Commandeur Gelskerke, deciding that the soil in the neighborhood of Kijk-over-al was becoming exhausted -- a process accelerated by the recent French raids during the War of the Spanish Succession, laid out a new Company plantation by the mouth of the Essequibo River near Flag Island.[33] The significance of this migration, begun by Geleskerke, cannot be underestimated. The future of the Colony was thus to depend upon sugar cultivation for which the coast lands were especially suitable. But concurrent with this was the fact that most of the coastal lands were below sea level, with no natural drainage, necessitating the construction of expensive drainage canals and sea walls. Such ambitious undertakings were far beyond the meagre resources of poor settlers who owned only a few slaves. The coastal frontier in Guianese history was clearly a 'big man's frontier.' This migration to the coast laid the basis of a wealthy plantocracy which, following a long struggle, overthrew Company rule. The administrative headquarters of the colony was moved to Fort Zeelandia on Flag Island, renamed Fort Island, in 1739, by Commandeur Hermanus Gelskerke.[34] The commitment to coastal development had been made. A. J. Seymour,

the leading poet-intellectual in contemporary Guyana, has written of this interesting aspect of his country's history:

There Runs a Dream

There runs a dream of perished Dutch plantations
In these Guiana rivers to the sea.

Black waters rustling through vegetation
That towers and tangles banks, run silently
Over lost stellings where the craft once rode
Easy before trim dwellings in the sun
And fields of indigo would float out broad
To lose the eye right on the horizon.

These rivers know that strong and quiet men
Drove back a jungle, gave Guiana root
Against the shock of circumstance, and then
History moved down river, leaving free
The forest to creep back, foot by quiet foot
And overhang black waters to the sea.[35]

In 1738 Laurens Storm van's Gravesande arrived in the colony as Secretary to Commandeur Gelskerke. He was to become one of the most famous Dutch administrators in the history of Guiana. A change in the colonial constitution was enacted in 1739. The size of the Raad was increased from four to six, with one of the two new members to be chosen from among the non-company planters. All settlers were required to participate in a local militia which was divided into three districts. Each district militia was commanded by a captain, and he, along with the other officers, performed the duties of justices of the peace and constables. These officers of the burgher militia were selected by the Commandeur and his Council. In 1743 Gravesande, who had become Commandeur in the previous year, organized these six burgher officers into a College of Kiezers (electors) for the purpose of nominating the representatives of the free-planters for service on the Council of Policy and Justice, which with another change in the constitution, now included five servants of the Company

and two non-Company colonials.[36] The College of Kiezers and the Council of Policy and Justice are of significance because the British were forced to work through these 'peculiar' institutions in their administration of the territory in the nineteenth century.

Essequibo's sister colony on the Berbice River had been from the early seventeenth century a proprietary colony owned by the descendants of its founder, Abraham van Peere. The States-General confirmed this status in a new charter in 1678. The French conquered the territory in 1712, but returned it under the terms of the 1714 Peace of Utrecht for a monetary compensation. The necessity to 'ransom' the Colony forced the formation of a consortium of Dutch mercantile houses to foot the bill. By 1720 a new company, the Berbice Association, had been formed to take over the plantations. In 1732, after a prolonged dispute with the West India Company over jurisdictional rights, the Berbice Association was granted a charter and a constitution for the Colony similar to that of Essequibo.[37]

The two colonies of Berbice and Essequibo remained separate, distinct units. But meanwhile a third colony sprang up between them. Settlements were founded in 1745 along the Demerara River. Most of the very first settlers in this area came from Essequibo with the permission of the Zeeland Chamber and with Jonathan Samuel van's Gravesande (son of Laurens) as Commandeur of the Demerara settlement in 1750. His father was given the title of Directeur-General of the Two Rivers.[38]

The new settlements were very successful. In 1784, after a short interval of both English and French occupation, Demerara and Essequibo were formally joined under one government. The seat of this government was placed at Stabroek on the Demerara River. It was

Stabroek which the British renamed Georgetown in 1812. One Commandeur was appointed for both districts in 1784; the two Courts of Policy were united in 1785, but the Courts of Justice were not combined until 1812.[39]

In the 1750's Gravesande reported the arrival of English colonists in Demerara. Both Essequibo and Demerara had, in fact, opened up colonization to people of all nations, exempting colonists, for a ten year period, from the head tax on slaves. Many settlers from Barbados, Antigua and other West Indian islands were attracted. On 2 October 1743 Gravesande reported that there were seven English plantations in Essequibo.[40] With the growth of Demerara, English settlers came to that river and one Gedney Clarke of Barbados had, by 1752, erected two sugar mills in that colony.[41] In a letter home of 14 April 1753 Gravesande remarked that of the inhabitants of Demerara "by far the greatest number consisted of English or of those understanding the English language." He informed the Company that he had given them permission to hold religious services in their own language.[42] The Company's register of 9 January 1762 shows that in Essequibo there were sixty-eight plantations, eight of which were owned by Englishmen, while in Demerara, of the ninety-three plantations, thirty-four were owned by Englishmen. Moreover a large number of the Dutch owned plantations in Demerara were managed by English attorneys.[43]

The 1780's witnessed a long series of confrontations between the free colonists and Company authority as imposed by the government of the Colony. The decision to impose a higher head tax on slaves was the symbolic rallying cry around which the planters gathered. Numerous petitions, memorials and protests were sent from Demerara and Essequibo

to the Directors of the Company, the States-General and the Stadtholder, calling for a redress of grievances. Finally, a preliminary investigatory committee was appointed and the Stadtholder sent two Commissioners, Baron van Grovestins and William Cornelis Boey, to the Colony to institute a "Plan of Redress" and whatever else they deemed necessary to restore peace and provide for harmonious relations in the Two Rivers.[44]

Under the Plan of Redress, which was put into effect in 1789, there was to be one Court of Policy for both colonies consisting of: the Directeur-Generaal, the Commandeur of Essequibo, the Fiscal (Sheriff) of Demerara, two colonists from Essequibo and two from Demerara. The Directeur-Generaal had a casting vote in case of a deadlock. Each colony was to have its own Court of Justice made up of six colonists, the Directeur-Generaal (Commandeur in Essequibo) and one adviser. Each College of Kiezers was increased in size to seven, the members being elected for life by those colonists owning twenty-five or more slaves. The College of Kiezers nominated people for vacancies on the Court of Policy and Justice. The final selections were still made by the respective Courts from among the nominees.[45] The conscious aim of this plan was to give the colonists an increased sense of participation in the affairs of the colonies.

British interest in Guiana technically dates back to the expeditions of Raleigh although the English Guiana Company, 1627-1629, was a failure. The capture of Guiana in 1781 was inextricably bound up with economic and international rivalries. Allegations presented to the House of Commons in 1780 contended that the Dutch and the French in the East and West Indies "had given every protection to our

rebellious subjects." Of even greater significance was the commercial treaty which the Dutch signed with the thirteen United States by which "another enemy was added to the formidable combination already against this country [Great Britain]; an enemy whose proximity and maritime strength greatly increased the dangers with which Great Britain was already surrounded."[46] In response, the British decided to seize the Dutch island of St. Eustatius "that abominable nest of pirates," the heart of the contraband trade from which the Dutch profiteered.[47]

The British Government cared little for Guiana -- it was a depressed area in comparison to the wealth of St. Eustatius. But to the British settler in Guiana the economic advantages of British capital were very great. Captain Edward Thompson, who accepted the capitulation of Demerara and Essequibo, wrote to the Secretary of State that "these colonies were an acquisition to the Crown of Great Britain of every quality and advantage and more particularly to support and nourish the West India Isles."[48] The Dutch inhabitants were quite willing to assure themselves the economic and commercial advantages of the British market which political capitulation brought. The lack of resistance to the British was also due to the presence and growing influence of the English settlers who had been in Guiana for some time prior to 1781. The exploitation of the land had been an Anglo-Dutch enterprise for the last half of the eighteenth century. According to Thompson, every Dutchman and every Englishman in the colony wanted Guiana united to Great Britain.[49]

The migratory flow of British subjects to the Guiana "frontier" increased. The astonishing natural wealth and consequent potentialities of Guiana confirmed the tendency of the inhabitants to integrate their

economic relationships with those of the British West Indian islands and thus to stimulate migration.

There were, however, more fundamental forces which were behind this frontier movement in Caribbean history. The great age of huge profits in the West India islands was over. The islands, in the words of L. J. Ragatz, had become "the goal of spendthrift bankrupts eager to recoup their wasted fortunes, of penniless younger sons of gentility desirous of amassing means sufficient to become landed proprietors in the homeland, and the dumping-ground for the riff-raff of the parent country."[50] By the 1760's the giant profits had ended: "The wealth of the original West India colonies had no rational basis. It had been an artificial creation, resting upon a monopoly of supplying the home and British-American mainland markets with Caribbean products, enjoyed by the few residents of a small number of islands." As economic conditions changed, the plantocracy clung tenaciously to the outmoded doctrines of a fundamentally unsound system. In a most telling passage, Ragatz sets forth his main premise: "Had abolition never been instituted, had the regime of forced labor never come to an end, the proprietors there must still inevitably have suffered the general ruin which engulfed them. Deeper, underlying causes must be sought. Among the chief of these were a wasteful agricultural system, the rivalry of newly exploited tropical territories, adherence to a policy of restricted trade after all real justification for it had ceased to exist, vicious fiscal legislation in the mother country, and forty years of intermittent warfare."[51]

Guiana enjoyed natural advantages over the islands of land space, soil, climate (no hurricanes), and water transport. It possessed a

land area of 83,000 square miles, ten times the size of the area of all the British islands combined. Guiana was twenty times the size of Jamaica, forty times the area of Barbados and twelve hundred times the area of St. Kitts. It did not suffer the severe limitations of land space. Soil exhaustion had set in on the islands, and the slave trade which followed British annexation of the islands, and which was primarily responsible for the expansion of sugar production, only accelerated the process of diminishing returns. This latter factor was the result of the successive application of labor and capital to land areas which remained fixed in size. Land in large quantities in the Caribbean was only available in Guiana. Success stories of planters who came from Barbados, Trinidad, and Tobago, quickly spread throughout the Caribbean.[52] British merchants settled in Demerara. Despite the presence of English settlers, this initial formal association with Great Britain was short-lived; the colony yielded to the French and was then restored to the Dutch in 1783.

In 1792 the Charter of the Dutch West India Company was not renewed. The Commissioners who had been sent out to institute the Plan of Redress reported unfavorably on the policies of the Company. Since the last war with England the Company was heavily in debt and its creditors were lobbying for intervention by the government. The States-General issued government bonds to the shareholders to the amount of thirty per cent of the face value of their shares and assumed responsibility for administering the now United Colony of Demerary and Essequibo. Baron van Grovestnis, one of the Commissioners, was appointed Governor and Albertus Becker became Commandeur of Essequibo.[53]

With the outbreak of the French Revolutionary wars, Baron van Grovestnis, a partisan of the Prince of Orange, prepared to defend the colony against the French -- a move heartily supported by the English settlers. News of the flight of the Prince of Orange to England and the establishment of the Batavian Republic reached the colony in the spring of 1795. The Stadtholder sent instructions from England encouraging resistance to the new government in the Netherlands. But the Council of Policy decided to obey the de facto Government of the Netherlands. Baron van Grovestnis resigned his position in protest. For a three month period, April to June 1795, there was no Governor. Grovestnis had resigned and left the colony and no instructions arrived from the Netherlands. The Court of Policy decided that the government should be administered by two councillors, one from Demerara and one from Essequibo, for rotating periods of eight days. Finally instructions came naming Antony Beaujon, the Government Secretary, Governor.

In the midst of this unsettled governmental crisis a slave insurrection occurred in the colony. Faced with an urgent need for funds to suppress the uprising, the Court of Policy invited the College of Kiezers to meet with them in joint session. On 3 June 1795 it was decided that the Colonial Chest should be controlled by a special Combined Court composed of the Court of Policy plus four members of the College of Kiezers. It was to be the responsibility of this Combined Court to raise taxes for public expenditure.[54] The vicissitudes of an emergency situation created a new role for the colonists in taxation matters -- a function which the Combined Court subsequently clung to with tenacity. In the terms of capitulation to the British in 1796,

this became part of the "ancient laws and usages" of the colony which were to remain in force under British rule.

Economic distress for the planters was a by-product of the French Revolutionary Wars. Trade with the Netherlands was greatly diminished. Contraband trade with England and regular business with America only accounted for one-third of Guianese produce.[55] The English speculation in Guiana -- both in capital and people -- provided the most consistent pressure for the absorption of Guiana into the British Empire. The attraction of the British market was irresistable. The political security gained by being part of the Empire would secure English investments -- especially the capital in land, buildings, and machinery which could not easily be transferred to another location.

The fear of war and the consequent seizure of ships transporting cotton and other products was felt to be a real danger in 1795 by the English settlers in Dutch ruled Demerara. In 1795 Demerara and Esseqquibo produced almost ten million pounds of cotton, fifteen million pounds of coffee and fifteen thousand hogsheads of sugar.[56] The normal methods of commerce was for these goods to be shipped in British vessels to the Windward Islands then on to England to meet the debts of the plantation owners. War would mean a serious interruption in this process. A petition from many of the absentee proprietors of Guianese plantations was sent to the Secretary of State seeking protection of the goods and property they held in Guiana from seizure.[57] The settlers, who had to pay in kind for debts incurred, were in a most precarious situation.

All of the cotton plantations in Guiana, not to mention many coffee and sugar estates, were owned by British subjects and financed by British credit. The mills of Manchester depended largely on cotton

from Guiana.[58] Thus Manchester interests were inextricably woven into Guiana cotton plantations and security for all these vested interests resided in bringing Guiana under British dominion. British Honduras, Jamaica, the Leeward and Windward Islands all were British. The annexation of Guiana and Trinidad would bring a common political authority to the main areas of the Caribbean. Under the aegis of British political supremacy, economic opportunities would be facilitated. The golden age of the island production was over and Guiana was the new El Dorado, the new virgin territory for economic exploitation. In 1800 Henry Bolingbroke wrote that the Caribbean islands "have ceased to be of use. They have performed their appointed task in the civilization of the world."[59] Guiana possessed the superior natural advantages of soil so rich that "little more was required than to plant in the rainy and to reap in the dry season and the Earth gave her increase without manure, the plough or the harrow."[60] No hurricanes struck Guiana. Regular and abundant rains produced plentiful crops of cotton and sugar. Cheap sugar could still be produced for a profit in Guiana while it meant ruin in the islands. The flat coastland and numerous canals meant that cheap water transport could replace the extensive island process of removing the produce from the field.

The British, at first, hoped to have the colony accept the authority of the Stadtholder then resident in London. When this failed, and under the mounting pressure of economic interest groups, a naval squadron was sent to the mouth of the Demerara River in April 1796. The government accepted the rather generous terms of capitulation safeguarding the religion and ancient institutions of the colony. Almost at once a new rush of immigration from the islands took place. The

expansion of production was greatly stimulated by the now integral connection that Guiana had with the British market. John Turnbull, a powerful member of the West India interest, documented, in a report to the Colonial Secretary, the significant advances made in the export of staple products from 1797 to 1800 and noted the connection of this increase with British rule.[61] Speculation in land sky-rocketed. But the interests of Guianese speculators were sacrificed on the altar of European peace with the 1802 Treaty of Amiens restoring Guiana to the Batavian Republic. This restoration was vehemently protested by an even more powerful lobby in London.

The system of credit which established the link between the planter in Guiana and the merchant in Holland, England, and occasionally in France, was a primary factor motivating the political attitudes of this planter-merchant interest. Loans were secured from European mercantile houses in order to advance the cultivation of the plantations. These loans were to be repaid in annual installments through the consignment of crops to these mercantile establishments coupled with an agreement to buy the needed supplies from them. The merchant-creditor claimed the right of foreclosure on the mortgage, if necessary.[62]

This precarious mortgage-financing arrangement was an extremely complex web. When the British took over in 1796 most of the first mortgages on the plantations were held by Dutch firms. These mortgages stipulated the consignment of the whole of the produce and the right of furnishing the required supplies to the mortgagee. After the 1796 capitulation, such commercial intercourse with the Netherlands was either totally prohibited, or at best severely limited. The planters, in need of capital and supplies, were forced to establish

commercial connections with Great Britain, "and in order to proceed with the improvement of their plantations, sought assistance from the British merchants and in consequence sums of a very large amount were advanced on second and third mortgages."[63]

The Peace of Amiens, in 1802, brought disaster, for now the financial relationship with Britain was severed with the restoration of the colonies to the Batavian Republic. The planters were again forced to seek connections with the financial houses of the Netherlands. Furthermore, Dutch creditors holding the first mortgages descended upon the planters demanding payment, now that the colony had reverted to Dutch rule.[64] The drafts which British merchants had issued to be redeemed from their own stores were not honored by Dutch merchants. Millions of pounds of British capital invested in Guiana was in jeopardy. George Baillie informed John Sullivan, the Under-Secretary of State for War and the Colonies, that his house had credit extended to 300,000 l. in Demerara alone.[65] As long as Guiana remained under re-imposed Dutch rule the immobile interests of the British and the elaborate contractual obligations would be greatly disrupted. British mercantile interests, especially through George Baillie, made successive representations to the British Government in 1803 for the recapture of the colony.

When hostilities broke out again in 1803, and a British naval squadron captured Guiana, the colonists were most anxious to avoid any future return of Guiana to the Dutch. There would be no further retrocession and thus the terms of the capitulation, signed on board H. M. S. Heureux and published on 19 September 1803, serve as the legitimation of British rule in Guiana. "The laws and usages of the

Colony shall remain in force and be respected, the mode of taxation now in use be adhered to, and the inhabitants shall enjoy the public exercise of their religion in the same manner as before capitulation."[66] There were no real constitutional or political changes in Guiana as an immediate result of acquisition by the British. Lieutenant General Grinfield appointed Lieutenant Colonel Robert Nicolson as Lieutenant Governor of the Colony on 1 October 1803 for a provisional period, but ultimately on 18 August 1804 Antony Beaujon, who had administered the government from 1795 to 1802 under both British and Dutch rule, was reappointed Governor. After his death in 1806, H. W. Bentinck, a Dutch relation of the Duke of Portland, was named Governor.[67]

The British, faced with an unprecedented demand on the part of creditors, both Dutch and English, for their money, finally declared a moratorium in 1812 on payments to Dutch creditors.[68] Sequestration had been rampant. British capitalists constantly argued for the ultimate retention of Guiana as part of the general peace -- especially considering the immobility of British capital. Another potent influence for the retention of Guiana was the real and imagined potentialities of this "great land" and its advantages over the rest of British Caribbean territory. The lure of "El Dorado" still had a magnetic hold. In June 1813, John Monroe, the officer administering the Government of Demerara, wrote of Guiana:

> Certainly these colonies are most highly qualified by nature to remedy the principal inconvenience which must result to the West India Islands from an interruption of their intercourse with the United States of America. Corn and rice may be cultivated with certain success and in any quantities and cattle especially in Berbice may

> be raised to an extent with great facility and little expense; but unfortunately these humble paths to certain profit are overlooked by people whose sole attention is absorbed in the expectations of obtaining rapid fortunes by the growth of sugar, coffee, or cotton. Timber fit for every purpose of building and for casks is also abundant everywhere, and the island navigation gives the very greatest facility to carry it to market.[69]

The vast, untapped virgin territory of Guiana was an investor's dream. In the imagination of the British capitalists, especially those with vested interests in Guiana, the possibilities were unlimited. But they felt that Guiana's development hinged on the security of existing British credit which would serve as a guarantee for inducing further investment which in turn all depended on Guiana remaining British.

Finally in 1814 a rather complex debt settlement scheme was adopted especially as it concerned Dutch creditors, which established a priority of mortgage payments. And by conventions signed in 1814 and 1815 Guiana officially passed into British hands.[70] British capital invested in Guiana since 1781 thus obtained the political security it had demanded and the future seemed bright.

Turning to the more particularly political developments in this 1803 to 1812 period, Governors Beaujon and Bentinck represented those elements of the colonial society loyal to the old Dutch state. The legal, judicial, and political institutions, guaranteed by the 1803 Capitulation, remained untouched from 1803 to 1812.[71] The "imperial neglect" of Guiana in this period was due to a number of factors. The same Secretary of State had charge of both war and the colonies, and his attention was certainly monopolized by the Napoleonic Wars. Furthermore the change of personnel at the top was frequent. The

Colonial Secretaries of the period were: Hobart, 1801-1804; Camden, 1804-1805; Castlereagh, 1805-1806; Windham, 1806-1807; Castlereagh, 1807-1809; and Liverpool, 1809-1812. It was not until 1812 that Henry, Earl of Bathurst began his tenure of fifteen years in the Colonial Office.

In April 1812 Bentinck was replaced by Major-General Hugh Lyle Carmichael. Forty-six years old, Carmichael had been commander of the military forces in the colony. He was in poor health and died thirteen months later. He was particularly ill-suited to be Governor, contemptuous of subordinates, unwilling to accept advice. His successor, Murray, said that he would not even let his secretary see his despatches with the result that they were not properly cared for -- written on odd scraps of paper "scattered over different rooms in indiscriminate confusion."[72] Carmichael was committed, almost passionately, to the maintenance of British supremacy. His first task, as he viewed it, was to maintain the ascendancy of Britain. He had a deep respect for, although little knowledge of, the British Constitution, "the purest of all Governments," Parliament "the most perfect of all models of Legislation." In his zeal to make the colonial government more British he drastically altered the constituion -- for the nearer it came to that of Britain "the more it will approximate the zenith of human wisdom."[73] Despite official instructions not to tamper with the constitutional framework of the colony, on 7 September 1812 Carmichael dismissed the College of Kiezers, who were mostly Dutch and therefore opposed to his anglicization measures. He announced the combination of the College of Kiezers with the Financial Representatives, the extension of the suffrage to everyone who paid a tax on an income

of 10,000 guilders or who possessed twenty-five slaves. The members of this Combined Board of Kiezers and Financial Representatives were to serve two year terms. What Carmichael hoped to do was to eliminate the old Dutch influence and provide an opportunity for more English representation in the government. To the votes of the slave owners were now added those of the "learned professions and commerce" who were mostly English. He recognized the Combined Court's (the Court of Policy plus the new Combined Board) control of financial matters. It is likely that Carmichael viewed the Combined Court as a sort of House of Commons and the Court of Policy as similar to the House of Lords.[74]

The significance of this action was great. The Combined Court, in which the colonial members outnumbered the official section ten to four (addition of the six Financial Representatives-Kiezers to the four colonial members of the Court of Policy), now had control not only of taxation but also of expenditure. Lord Bathurst rebuked Carmichael for this action claiming that it was unconstitutional. It was not officially changed, however, until 1831 when Demerara and Essequibo were united with Berbice to form British Guiana. From 1812 to 1831 the minutes of the Combined Court show that it debated and voted not only taxes but also some expenditure of funds.[75] This was, from the British point of view, an exceptionally dangerous precedent and it was vehemently debated throughout the 1830's and 1840's.

Major-General John Murray succeeded Carmichael in May 1813 and continued as Governor until April 1824. It was in August of Murray's first year in office that the Conventions were signed between the Netherlands and Great Britain officially ceding Demerara, Berbice,

Essequibo and the Cape of Good Hope to the British for three million pounds in compensation. He continued to operate the system of government as amended by Carmichael and it was not until the Combined Court refused to liquidate a debt due to the Royal Treasury in 1823 that the British Government again took note of the awkward constitutional arrangement in which the elected majority of the Combined Court was able to control colonial expenditures. Murray advised Bathurst not to bother changing the system of 1812 until the union of the colonies took place. Again habits of legislative conduct were being entrenched which would prove very troublesome to reverse.

Governor Murray's tenure, despite his proclivity for the planter class, was not always pleasant. He was faced with a most difficult task: in an era of agitated feelings, debate over Parliament's Act to register slaves to help enforce the abolition of the slave trade, and the general fear of a Negro revolt -- the English Governor had to try to reconcile English ideas with Dutch institutions of government. Often as Governor collided with Combined Court, London's supremacy was invoked in mediation.[76] This basic antithesis was to plague British policy in Guiana -- especially when that policy in regard to slavery was viewed by the colonists as destructive of their interests. Before continuing this narrative it will be necessary to step back for an overall view of the anti-slavery movement and the actions of the British Government. Only then can we return to Guiana to analyze the reception of that British policy.

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Chapter II

Amelioration and Emancipation: Imperial Policy

The most pervasive institution in the history of the West Indies, in general, and of British Guiana, in particular, was plantation slavery. Slavery was much more than a peculiar system of forced labor. It had become the very basis of organized society throughout the West Indies, and as the pillar of what men considered to be the essence of their communal relationships it was regarded as indispensable.

Slavery was, however, initially an economic solution to the needs of a vast plantation labor problem but through a historical dialectic it came to be both the cause and the effect of a sugar dominated society. In an immense circular rationalization slavery served as its own raison d'etre.

The New World was the scene of a new agricultural experiment in the large scale production of a staple commodity. The virgin nature of the new society, both geologically and culturally, was an open invitation to the inventiveness of nascent European capitalism. This new type of economic organization found itself free to develop in a society devoid of traditional barriers and encumbrances. For the plantation to operate with efficiency and profit in the West Indies, laborers were needed to work long hours in total submission to the dictates of the plantation manager. Slaves were imported to maximize efficiency and profits, and were considered capital equipment essential to facilitate such a large scale economic production.

To protect this priority, laws developed, codes were framed, all with a view of circumscribing the chattel status of the Negro slave. The law defined the slave's person as the property of another; his will

as subject to his owner's authority; his labor or services obtained through coercion. Stanley Elkins and Frank Tannenbaum have argued the uniqueness of the slave systems of the Western hemisphere.[1] The New World was a tabula rasa with none of the customary feudal immunities for the laborer. There was no concern by the local government for his welfare, and the imperial government was for a long time too distant and too preoccupied. The Church had little power in the area and its missionaries were traditionally regarded with suspicion by the colonists. This was in marked contrast to the power of organized religion in England, and it was, of course, in England where the abolition of slavery was effected. Elkins has contended that slavery in the New World derived its pervasive character and entrenched role because it was, in effect, unchallenged by other institutions.[2]

There seems to be some credence to the more recent thesis of David Davis who has emphasized the historical continuity of slavery despite the uniqueness of its 'legalization' in the New World. While granting the importance of the abstract legal status of the slave, Davis has contended that this did not make slavery more severe than, for example, Roman forms. He has written of a historical legacy of some three thousand years of bondage from the Ancient Near East to the nineteenth century. During the Middle Ages, Italian merchants engaged in a very lucrative Mediterranean slave trade. "L'economie esclavagiste des colonies modernes est purement et simplement la continuation de celle des colonies medievales."[3] The Spanish and Portuguese Empires provided the chronological-transitional link to the British, Dutch and French slave systems. Davis, in summing up his argument for the continuity as well as the differences in West India slavery wrote:

> No slave system in history was quite like that of the West Indies and the Southern states of America. Marked off from the free population by racial and cultural differences, for the most part deprived of the hope of manumission, the Negro slave also found his life regimented in a highly organized system that was geared to maximum production for a market economy. But slavery in America was not unique in its central characteristics or in its underlying contradiction. Because slaves are men who are defined as things, the institution has always generated tension and conflicts.[4]

It was this central paradox of slavery, this inherent tension between the slave's manhood and his status as an object, which provided the underlying drama of West Indian slavery. It was this problem of moral perception which was at the root of the social-psychological tension of the problem of slavery in Western culture. These issues and conflicts were inherently interrelated to the more cosmic questions of the nature of man, of society, of the universe, and it was changes in these outlooks which provided the impetus for the more mundane re-organization of slave society.

This basic conflict, present in all slave societies, was exaggerated by the Elysium-character of the New World -- of that image of a section of the globe uncontaminated by, and free from, the corruption of European society. The "new Adam of the West" was idyllically conceived as unencumbered by the fears and superstitions of a decadent civilization. The colonizer was a pioneer of a new order, a resident of a new paradise, a sojourner in a new El Dorado. Yet at the very heart of this liberating image, defining all social relationships, the basis of the economic order, was slavery -- that ultimate institution of the dehumanization of man.[5] The attempt to reconcile both these factors -- and its ultimate failure -- is an essential element of the historical legacy of the Western half of the earth.

Slavery was the bulwark of West India social structure. Society was rather rigidly divided into three distinct classes: white, free persons of color, and slaves. While there were numerous distinctions within the white class -- for example, the planters, merchants and professional people were set apart from the poorer whites, the overseers, small shopkeepers, plantation bookkeepers, and clerks -- the class as a whole was united in its whiteness and conviction of its superiority and station in society. Within the class of slaves there were distinctions between Africans recently imported and the locally born Creoles, as well as between house slaves and field slaves, and between those who were the "drivers" of the great gangs and those who were "driven."[6] The institution of chattel slavery, despite certain nuances, was the corner-stone of the whole superstructure of colonial society.

The only real exception to the separation of the racial classes was the rather common practice of sexual unions between white men and Negro women which produced a whole group of mulattoes. This factor, combined with the numerical preponderance of Negro males, had significant results on the family life of the slaves. Since each individual was the property of another person, conceptions of "husband," or "wife," "son," or "daughter" diminished in importance. Neither wife nor children were dependent upon a father for support since they received their allowances directly from their owner. Slave society was substantially "matrifocal" in the sense that the status of the child followed that of the mother. The matrifocal system meant informal and unstable marriage norms. "It was the claims of slave ownership which made the slave mother the essential link in the chain of descent and reduced

marriage to the status of a personal arrangement between the two partners which could be terminated at will."[7]

Stanley Elkins has written of the absence of "counter institutions" to mitigate the effects of slavery in the United States and the British West Indies -- institutions like the Church and the Crown which helped balance the cruelty of slavery under Portugal and Spain.[8] While slavery in Latin America might have been less harsh and a more open system, the psychological effects of slavery on the Negro -- and also on the owner -- were similar throughout the hemisphere. The social behavior of the slaves was defined, in a general way, by the necessity to react to a whole new set of symbols of authority and new modes of experience. Imported slaves faced a whole panoply of cultural shocks -- from capture in the interior of West Africa, to transportation to the coast, the infamous "Middle Passage," and finally sale in the West Indies. What a confusing, terrifying experience this must have been for those who survived! M. Herskovits, writing on West African culture, commented on the energy, vitality and complex organization of West African tribal life -- cultural traditions of an essentially heroic, war-like nature -- in contradistinction to the stereotype of the "Sambo" personality of docility, laziness and irresponsibility. "The typical West African tribesman was a distinctly warlike individual; he had a profound sense of family and family authority; he took hard work for granted; and he was accustomed to live by a highly formalized set of rules which he himself often helped to administer."[9]

The series of psychic shocks detached the new slaves from their old traditions and values, setting them adrift in search of new standards. A tremendously significant psychological adjustment took place. Again

Elkins: "Cruelty per se cannot be considered the primary key to this [adjustment]; of far greater importance was the 'closedness' of the system, in which all lines of authority descended from the master and in which alternative social bases that might have supported alternative standards were systematically suppressed. The individual, consequently, for his very psychic security, had to picture his master in some way as the 'good father' even when . . . it made no sense at all."[10]

Conceiving the owner as "father" fits into a family structure in which the role of the natural father was almost non-existent. It is also interesting to note that the male slave was always referred to as "boy" -- the slave being conceived perpetually as a child. The system provided psychological and social rewards for good role playing with rather significant sanctions (e.g., floggings) for striking out against it. Such habits of mind and behavior once established proved either to be exceedingly difficult to eradicate, or to be rejected with intensity.

The fateful decision, made in the seventeenth century, to grow tropical staples -- given the social and political techniques of the time -- required some kind of forced labor. This appeared to be the only way of keeping relatively large numbers of people at work on relatively small pieces of land when they were surrounded by a considerable amount of fertile unoccupied land. From the start, tropical American possessions provided areas for profitable investment. But the profitability of the original West India colonies was artificial, based upon a monopoly of supplying the domestic and British North American markets with Caribbean products. By the 1760's these giant profits had ended, quite some time prior to competition from foreign

markets and newly added colonies. The curse of absenteeism, monoculture, out-moded credit arrangements all hung like giant albatrosses around the plantation's economic neck. As L. J. Ragatz has pointed out, it was a fundamentally unsound economic system, "a diseased social organism."[11] The opening up of Trinidad, Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo added further competition to the islands, but the methods employed and the fate eventually suffered were the same despite a brief period of boom.

The original purpose of what has been called the "South Atlantic System "-- a regional, economic, political and social order -- which began in the early seventeenth century with the seizure of the smaller Caribbean islands, was to establish planting societies oriented toward the single purpose of supplying Europe with tropical staples. The American Revolution brought an end to the unity of the old "triangular trade" in slaves, sugar and provisions between the North American colonies, the West Indies and the African coast.[12] This, coupled with an increase in other areas, meant ruin for the inefficient Caribbean planting societies. The system itself was, as mentioned above, artificial and archaic.

The precariousness of growing sugar in the West Indies is illustrated in the following account of the risks involved as seen in 1690:

> The plants in the ground are often subject to be devoured, wounded, and torn by ants or undermined and destroyed at the roots by mug-worms. Too much rain or too much drought in either season is a certain dimunition of the crop, if not a total destruction of the plants, nay, if the rains come too late, which often happens, a whole year's planting is lost. When all these mischiefs are escaped and the canes are of considerable height, then are they liable to be twisted, broke, and totally spoiled by the furious hurricanes

> that once in three or four years, like a fit of an ague, shake the whole islands, not only do the crops an injury, but sometimes tumble down level their mills, work-houses and strongest buildings; but, escaping all these, as the canes ripen they grow more and more combustible and are thereby subject to the malice and drunken rages of angry and desperate run-away negroes, as well as many other accidents of fire; the fury whereof when once got into a field of canes is extremely quick, terrible, and scarcely to be resisted before it has destroyed the whole parcel; but when they are brought to full perfection for cutting, and the planter's expectations as ripe as they, if unreasonable rains happen, or that no winds blow, then do they all rot and perish in the ground; the slaves and servants all stand idle, looking down upon their master's decaying fortune, and at last are only employed in clearing the ground again from that useless rubbish in which all the year's hope is perished.[13]

In addition to these factors many of the institutional aspects of the plantation system were deleterious to efficiency and profitability. In the relatively short-lived heyday of West Indian prosperity, profits were high enough to compensate for these factors.

The plantation system was carried on essentially by credit based upon the expected income from the next crop. Each estate had a close credit connection with a mercantile establishment in London, Bristol, Liverpool, or Glasgow. The planter's year began around 1 August. He would send out an order for needed supplies -- a credit transaction, usually in the form of a mortgage, with a British merchant house. In return for granting credit, the merchant required the planter to buy supplies from him and to ship his rum and sugar through the lending house on a commission basis.[14] The prevalence of absenteeism added to the financial costs. With the owner in many cases living in England, the management of the estate was entrusted to an attorney who ran the plantation for a certain percentage, usually five or six percent, of

the cash crop. Not only was this fee a considerable drain on the plantation income, but the attorney had all sorts of opportunities to engage in legal as well as illegal additions to his income through the patronage he could dispense.[15] In 1817 more than half of all the plantations in Demerara and Berbice were administered by attornies.[16]

With the termination of their favorable competitive and imperial position -- which had artificially inflated their profits -- the backward agricultural methods were no longer redeemable and the planters faced a bleak economic future. The planters could not escape from the British channels of trade. They were confined not only by imperial policy, but also by their debt relationship to the merchants who handled their crops.

The sugar production of the British West Indies increased tremendously in the closing decade of the eighteenth century due to the impetus of the destruction of Saint Domingue as a source of European sugar, and in the nineteenth century by the addition of new sugar producing colonies like Trinidad, Demarara and Berbice. But the evils of overproduction for the British market soon set prices tumbling. By 1799 a depression had hit West Indian trade. "By increasing their production beyond what the British market could absorb at profitable prices, the West Indians had exposed themselves to all the perils of a market [in Europe] in which they had neither monopolies nor privileges to protect them from cheaper competition."[17] The cheap and plentiful sugar of Cuba, Brazil and the East Indies forced West Indian sugar off the European market. The high price of sugar on the British market was to be an increasing subject of concern in domestic politics. In 1796 William Pitt remarked: "If it should ever be manifest that the price

paid by Great Britain for her own Colony Sugar, was so greatly beyond that, at which she might be elsewhere supplied, as to be oppressive to the British Consumer, and detrimental to the Revenue, in such cases, the Mother Country might wish their Cultivation to be directed to other objects."[18] The sugar boom of the 1790's was over and the glaring problem of British West Indian sugar industry was apparent -- its lack of competitive efficiency.

As Ragatz has pointed out, the decline of the West Indies was no sudden event, but the result of a long, lingering process. The planters, despite all warnings, stuck with sugar and in desperate speculations sought to take advantage of short term profits. It is only in this general context that we can come to understand the origins and results of the abolition movement.

The anti-slavery movement, beginning in the latter half of the eighteenth century, was, in many ways, made possible by and the result of new subliminal attitudes toward sin, human nature and progress. The moral contradictions of slavery were not readily perceived until there was a transformation in religious and intellectual attitudes to the point where it was considered an obligation to combat slavery as a positive evil, the existence of which seemed to threaten that moral security provided by the new system of values.[19]

Under the influence of Latitudinarianism, the Calvinistic notion of natural man's corrupt nature, and the necessity of suffering and subordination and that the only true freedom lay in salvation from the world, was replaced by an increased confidence in man's capacity for moral improvement. The "men of latitude" looked to primitive societies for models of natural viture. A new emphasis in Christianity on the

quest for social justice was fostered. The Christian of the mid-eighteenth century, surrounded by a world of increasing skepticism and Newtonian science, retained "in a blurred and softened form, the emotions which his creed had both reflected and fostered. The God above him becomes more shadowy than the God within him, until at last he is left with the basic attitude of sentimentalism -- a sense of inward virtue and freedom which must somehow find coroboration in the nature of the universe."[20] In a world beset by doubts and fears of meaninglessness for the old Christian outlook, humanitarian reform provided a means of security. Anti-slavery could not have become a powerful international force had it not been preceded by a major shift in these attitudes toward human nature and progress. The Negro slave was a ready symbol of dehumanization. A growing coterie of evangelicals came to see slavery as symbolizing all the forces that threatened the true destiny of man. There was a sense of living in an age of revelation in which all the frauds and errors of the past were being unmasked and all that remained certain was man's capacity to know and choose his true good. In his Histoire des deux Indies (1770) Abbé Raynal said that what distinguished man from the beasts was not reason but freedom of will -- the power to say "je veux" or "je ne veux pas" -- which slavery denied. "If the Christian faith did thus sanction the greed of empires [slavery], it would be necessary to proscribe for all times to come its bloodthirsty doctrines."[21]

By the 1770's the forces of anti-slavery were able to exploit a whole panorama of themes and convictions which came to portray the slave as a man of natural virtue and sensitivity who was at once oppressed by the most atrocious vices of civilization and yet capable

of receiving its highest benefits. In contradistinction to the traditional classical and Christian theories of servitude and suffering which could be used to rationalize the brute fact of forced labor, there were emerging new modes of thought and feeling and a growing faith in the possibility of moral progress.[22] In a very real sense, however, these trends, contexts, and backgrounds are only abstractions, for no matter how ripe the circumstances were, it took individual men like Wilberforce and Buxton to make the specific decisions and commitments necessary to coalesce anti-slavery opinion.

The anti-slavery forces, after a series of reversals, were finally successful in achieving the abolition of the slave trade in 1807. The The period 1807 to 1833 has been the subject of two main historiographical theories. The first emphasizes the role of the humanitarian movement in England and sees the Act of Abolition of 1833 as an example of the benevolence of imperial trusteeship.[23] The other views abolition and emancipation to be only elements of a more over-arching process of economic decline.[24] This interpretation has been further developed by Eric Williams who has emphasized the rise of laissez-faire economics and Elsa Goveia who has viewed the emancipation of the slaves as resulting from the irreversible decline of the slave system.[25]

The leading figures in the anti-slavery movement were William Wilberforce, Thomas Buxton, Zachary Macauley, Henry Brougham, and Stephen Lushington. In January 1823 the Society for the Mitigation and Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Dominions, commonly known as the Anti-Slavery Society, was established in London with Macauley as editor of its publication, the Anti-Slavery Monthly. The President of the society was H. R. H. William Frederick, Second

Duke of Gloucester, nephew of George III. Serving as Vice Presidents were: Sir James Mackintosh, Brougham, Thomas Clarkson, Wilberforce, William Dillwyn, Lushington, and William Smith. Within one year more than two hundred and twenty branches had been established throughout the country serving as propaganda agencies, and in 1823-24 over 750 petitions opposing slavery were presented to Parliament. In March of 1823 Wilberforce published a pamphlet: An Appeal to the Religion, Justice and Humanity of the Inhabitants of the British Empire in behalf of the Negro slaves in the West Indies. In May 1823 Buxton introduced a motion in Parliament for the gradual abolition of slavery.[26]

The connection and interaction between the abolitionists and the East India sugar interest has been the subject of much debate. The interesting question that has been raised on many occasions has been to what extent were those who opposed West Indian slavery motivated by economic interests in the East Indies which would benefit by such action. Zachary Macauley did own some estates in the East Indies. William Whitmore, a prominent figure in the 'East India interest', served for a time as a Vice President of the Anti-Slavery Society. James Cropper, the greatest importer of East India sugar into Liverpool was an important member of the Society. In Parliamentary debates in April 1822 Buxton did urge the removal of the 10s. per hundredweight discriminatory duty on East India sugar.[27] The East India interest argued that the unrestricted importation of free grown sugar from the East Indies was an effective way of abolishing slavery, increasing the revenue of the state and providing cheaper sugar for the domestic customer.[28]

While all of the above was true, it does not prove conclusively very much of anything. The British Parliament was a congerie of a

large number of overlapping interest groups that joined together on various issues of common concern. It did not mean that the anti-slavery movement was controlled by the East India interest, but it was quite evident that both groups used each other in support of their desired goals.

Under increased pressure from both the "Saints" and other groups to do something about slavery, and the West India interest to do nothing, Lord Liverpool's Government tried to steer a middle course in 1823. George Canning, Foreign Secretary and leader in Commons, favored some form of amelioration to help prepare the slaves for eventual freedom. Lord Bathurst, the Colonial Secretary, sent out two circulars to the West India colonies in May 1823. By an Order in Council the Crown was to impose on Crown colonies a system of enforcing Sunday leisure, securing the slaves in the possession of their property, abolishing flogging as a punishment for women, and forbidding the use of the whip in the field. The circular addressed to those colonies with legislatures, urged them to enact these regulations.[29] The Colonial Assemblies were for the most part defiant and evasive. The Jamaica Journal reacted vitriolically:[30]

> If Messers. Wilberfoce and Buxton persist in their motion, we shall enquire into the power possessed by the imperial Parliament to legislate for us internally. 17 May 1823
>
> Our heads are giddy in reading this unholy effusion [Wilberforce's pamphlet] from the fanaticism of second childhood, and of inveterate and reckless malice. 21 June 1823
>
> When the inhabitants of this island bow the knee before that creature of a day, that tool and organ of the Saints, that fourth-rate fellow of a party, a Colonial Secretary of State [Bathurst], they will richly merit to be stript of their possessions, and to be scattered over the earth: unpitied victims of the unfledged oratory of Buxton, and of the contemptible enmity of Macauley. 11 October 1823

Charles Ellis, chief representative of the West India interest in Parliament, opposed any action by Parliament in regard to slavery. He felt that if slavery was to end, it should end like the decay of villeinage in England, where "it was not ploughed up by revolution or mown down by the scythes of a legislative abolition, but was plucked up, stalk by stalk by the progressive hand of private and voluntary enfranchisement."[31]

The position of the West Indian planter, in the face of the British attack on his economic and social order, was strangely anomalous. Throughout this period the planting class was on the defensive -- afraid of a slave rebellion, afraid of missionary influence, afraid of the British humanitarians. The isolation, among a subject people, on estates, a sense of insecurity arising from years of economic decline, all were constituent elements of the planter's psyche. As early as 1798 Bryan Edwards, a very prosperous absentee planter, expressed in Parliament a sense of profound moral crisis and an awareness that a new age was about to overwhelm the planters:

> The time, Sir, in which we live will constitute an awful period in the history of the world; for a spirit of subversion is gone forth, which sets at naught the wisdom of our ancestors and the lessons of experience. Those ranks and gradations which constitute the strength and ornament our society are everywhere broken down; and the lowest of mankind are raised to a level with the greatest, the most virtuous, and the most enlightened.[32]

The slave rebellion in St. Domingue was but one terrible reminder of the dreaded social revolution which they feared would sweep away their society of established privilege and slavery.

They marshalled their arguments against emancipation in the 1820's. But it must always be remembered that the struggle took place before

the British public, in the British Parliament and as part of British politics. Their main lobbying organization, the Committee of West India Planters and Merchants, joined the pamphlet warfare. The West India interest argued that slavery was beneficial to the people of Great Britain. This position took the well-established "old empire" route which saw the value of colonial trade in the training of seamen, the high sugar duties as income for the Crown, the colony as a market for English goods. The planters contended that the end of slavery would mean the end of sugar production in the West India colonies. Secondly, they argued how little the supposed 'evils' of slavery bothered the Negro who was portrayed as a docile figure with few needs, happily enjoying his state of servitude, obviously much better off than the average British factory worker. Thirdly, they foresaw the catastrophic results of emancipation -- the burning of plantations, killing of whites, and a new social order worse than the old. The freed Negro, naturally lazy, would not work, and in an agricultural activity that required the concentration of labor for productivity, this meant ruin. The availability of cheap, productive land would mean a general exodus from the plantation -- a factor that could only be obviated profitably by a system of forced labor.[33]

Slavery, in the eyes of the humanitarians, was indefensible, contrary to the law of God. As Buxton put it in his 1823 motion, "the state of slavery is repugnant to the principles of the British constitution and of the Christian religion."[34] The cause of abolition spawned a host of periodicals like the Anti-Slavery Reporter and was fueled by the active support of a number of more prominent journals.[35]

In retrospect, authors like W. L. Burn and P. D. Curtin have contended that in the context of the larger British emancipation controversy in which the humanitarians continually spoke of the moral indefensibility of slavery, the West India interest abandoned its most powerful logical defense. They failed to argue seriously that slavery was indeed a positive moral benefit to the entire community, including the slaves. Rather, they took the weaker, relativist position that the economic and social benefits of the slave system outweighed the evils involved.[36] This deficiency was understandable. The planting class resident in the British West Indies were after all English in their educational and intellectual outlooks. They therefore participated in the general inability to come right out and support slavery on a moral basis. They could not accept emancipation, but nor could they defend slavery with any real conviction. This was an example of the feeling of exile that Curtin has written of -- the fact that white colonials in the West Indies were split between two societies, the one in which they lived and the one to which they wished to return and from which they had received all of their intellectual and moral habits of mind. And it was from England, their true home, that they were being attacked.[37]

The policy of slave amelioration embarked upon by the British Government in the 1820's had mixed results. The London West India Committee of Planters and Merchants, aware of the depth of public concern and also faced with the twofold opposition of emancipationists and free traders, urged the colonists to ameliorate slave conditions: "The various parties who, from different motives, are hostile to the West Indies, are at least as powerful, and act upon a more extensive system, and with greater means of influence, on the public mind, than the

Proprietors and Merchants connected with the Colonies . . . . We cannot, therefore, beat them by influence -- we must trust to reason -- and the only way of getting that weapon into our hands, is by doing it speedily and effectually."[38] In the Crown Colonies, like Trinidad, the Order in Council of 1824 was put into effect by governmental fiat, but in those chartered colonies like Jamaica the legislatures demurred for some time. Their opposition was not only to the content of the measure but also for constitutional reasons -- they were very jealous in guarding what they considered to be their proper legislative rights against the encroachments of the imperial Parliament. British Guiana, as shall be seen, eventually adopted a modification of the Trinidad Order, but not after some opposition.

The battle against amelioration and abolition was fought not only in the colonies, but in London as well. As mentioned above, the Committee of West India Planters and Merchants continually badgered the Government. The West India interest in Parliament was stronger in the period 1820-27 than in either 1807 or 1833.[39] This interest group was informally represented by absentee planters, colonial agents, and British merchants. The group was not nearly as monolithic nor as numerous as its opponents claimed. In 1823 Buxton said in Parliament that the "West India interest could put forth a phalanx of 200 members in the House of Commons . . . . He was persuaded that his Majesty's Government would not be able to resist this powerful interest."[40] A more realistic estimate was made by Dr. Stephen Lushington in 1825; he estimated that there were "no less than fifty-six members of the House of Commons deeply and personally interested in the continuance of colonial slavery" who voted as a "compact body."[41] Recent analysis has shown that after

1827 the interest's strength declined rapidly.[42] This was due to the decline of the financial position of merchants and planters associated with the West Indies and hence their decreasing ability to finance candidates for Parliament. Of greater importance was the Reform Bill of 1832. At the close of the 1832 session there were thirty-five "West Indians" sitting in Commons. Sixteen lost their seats at the election.[43] In addition to these factors there were a number of internal, structural considerations which weakened the interest. The group was composed of planters and merchants, and despite the supposed identity of interests there were obvious differences of emphasis. Of the forty-three petitions on West Indian questions presented to Parliament between 1807 and 1833, only five were jointly prepared by merchants and planters.[44] This factor should not be overemphasized. The interdependence of merchant and planter was obvious in the commission-credit system of doing business. And in the nineteenth century many merchants became plantation owners either through outright purchase of estates or foreclosure on those of their debtors. In some instances this link was completed by their becoming ship owners as well. An obvious example of this was John Gladstone of Liverpool who was a merchant, owned plantations in Demerara and a fleet of ships.[45]

The most important internal conflict in the West India interest was between the old and the new colonies. The 'old' colonies (Barbados, Nevis, Antigua, St. Kitts, and Montserrat) had been settled between 1625 and 1632 and were heavily populated by 1800. The 'new' or conquered territories were added to the Empire in 1760-3 (Dominica, Grenada, and St. Vincent) and in 1803 (Trinidad, Tobago, Guiana, and St. Lucia). These new areas, except for Grenada, were relatively

unpopulated and contained a plentiful amount of virgin soil. Some historians have classified Jamaica in the 'new' category, although it had been taken from Spain in 1655, but most of its vacant land was mountainous and unsuited for sugar production. The existence of a colonial "sugar frontier" in Trinidad and Guiana drew resources away from, and provided new competition for, the older colonies. Rivalry was keen -- the older colonies jealously tried to guard their labor supply from the forages of planters in Demerara, Essequibo and Berbice. By 1828 these three colonies had almost surpassed Jamaica in the volume of sugar production. An interesting measure of the differences can be seen by comparing the prices paid for slaves in the period 1822-1830: in the old colonies (including Jamaica) prices ranged from £32 to £47, while in Trinidad the cost was £105, and £114 in British Guiana.[46]

Another area of conflict within the interest developed between London and the outports of Bristol, Liverpool, and Glasgow. The Liverpool West India Association, led by Gladstone, exerted its influence on Liverpool MP's, especially Canning and Huskisson, rather than in joining in a common effort with the London Association. Merchants trading from Liverpool and Glasgow tended to concentrate a large proportion of their trade in the new colonies. Most London and Bristol merchants were involved with Jamaica and the older Leeward islands.[47]

As it became more and more apparent that slavery was doomed, the MP's of the West India interest associated with the older colonies began to argue for compensation. The more densely populated colonies had less to fear from a change in the status of servile labor. The new colonies had much greater potential, undeveloped value for which slavery was viewed as an essential feature. In the debate over

emancipation, the willingness, even eagerness, of some of the planters to accept compensation weakened any attempts at a united front.[48] In the final analysis, however, this disunion was less important than the numerical decline, and both of these factors were secondary to the overall economic decline and the humanitarian thrust. And it must be remembered that the West India interest was precisely that, an interest group, and not a highly disciplined political party. They were deeply divided on all of the important issues that faced Parliament in the late 1820's.[49] They were only an ad hoc parliamentary grouping which possessed no coherence in a broader context. "The advent of parliamentary reform destroyed the interest, redistributed power to the new sources of national strength and effectually abandoned the spent colonies."[50]

It is of some importance to consider the make-up of the Colonial Office in this pre-1833 period in order to gain some understanding of the official attitudes toward slavery and its abolition that informed the minds of those men charged with framing imperial policy. The most prominent member of the Colonial Office staff was James Stephen, member of the Clapham Sect, son of the author of a famous treatise on the evils of West Indian slavery. He was chief counsel and from 1836 to 1847 served as Permanent Under-Secretary. Henry Taylor, head of the West India division of the Colonial Office, described Stephen's role: "For more than twenty-five years, during short tenures of strong secretaries of state and entire tenures, whether short or not, of some who were not strong, he more than any other man, virtually governed the colonial empire. Not that he was otherwise than profoundly subordinate; but he found the way to bring men to his own conclusions. And his advantages

from knowledge, experience, intellectual power, and enormous industry were such that perhaps no man of sense could have failed to defer largely to his judgment."[51] Stephen was "fervently religious," sharing the anti-slavery sentiments of his father and his uncle, Wilberforce. He also exhibited, as shall be seen in his treatment of apprenticeship in the legislative colonies, a profound respect for constitutional prerogatives and procedures. Stephen's main duties, following his appointment by Bathurst, was to watch over and report on "those masterpieces of subterfuge and evasion," the colonial meliorating acts.[52] This task provided him with an immense wealth of knowledge on the intricacies of West Indian constitutional and political activities.

Working closely with Stephen was Henry Taylor, literati and novelist, a frequent contributor to the Quarterly Review, and an implacable opponent of slavery. He was in favor of taking a strong stand on the question of meliorating the condition of the slaves because he felt that most of the governors in the slave colonies were identified in feeling and opinion with the slave owners. Taylor commented on the policy of compromise pursued by Liverpool's Government in the 1820's: "In 1824 the government of Lord Liverpool had taken up a position of mediation between the saints and the planters; finding an escape for themselves from the dilemma of the moment by one of those compromises in which an endeavor is made to reconcile repugnant principles and implacable opponents."[53] Melioration was instituted; the legislative colonies were to be conciliated and urged to act in accordance with the Orders in Council. "We tried everything. Many a conciliatory note was written; not a single assembly was conciliated . . . threats were found equally unavailing. The controversy went on year after year; the Assemblies

raged abroad; the saints wailed and howled at home; the Crown maintained an outward aspect of moderation; 'Not so, my sons, not so!'"[54]

The colonies were especially reticent to introduce compulsory manumission schemes to guarantee the right of slaves to purchase their freedom without their master's consent. It was felt that to concede such rights would demoralize the slaves instead of preparing them for freedom, because by inducing them to hoard money it would prevent the slaves from acquiring, in the words of a declaration of the Assembly of Barbados, "those wants and aspirations which were the mainspring of industry; that it would foster vice and discount, the idle and useless slave having to pay less for his freedom then one who was industrious and efficient; that old slaves, knowing they must soon be exempt from toil, would remain as a burden on the estate, whilst the young and vigorous worked themselves free; that the master, not willing to be deprived of his best labourers, would withdraw the facilities now granted for earning money."[55]

The period 1827 to 1830 witnessed a succession of governments too short-lived and too preoccupied to do more with the legislative colonies than follow a policy of admonition and rebuke. George Canning succeeded the elderly Lord Liverpool in April 1827 and Lord Goderich replaced Bathurst as Secretary of State for War and the Colonies. In August of that year Canning died and Goderich became Prime Minister with William Huskisson moving from the Board of Trade to Colonial Secretary. The Duke of Wellington replaced Goderich as Prime Minister in January 1828. Another shake-up in the Tory cabinet took place in the Spring of 1828 as William Huskisson and the other Canningites left the

government in disagreement over the commercial and foreign policies of the Duke of Wellington. Wellington replaced Huskisson with Sir George Murray as Colonial Secretary. Henry Taylor was convinced of Murray's general ineptitude in colonial affairs: "1828 and 1829 had been years of torpor in the Colonial Office."[56] Horace Twiss was Murray's Parliamentary Under Secretary. Taylor criticized Twiss as hopelessly misinformed and "of all the Under-Secretaries who had ever laid the weight of their authority upon the transactions of the Colonial Office, Twiss was the fleshiest incubus."[57] The Permanent Under Secretary, the highest ranking permanent civil servant, R. W. Hay, was, in Taylor's opinion, "obtuse but bold."[58] Things changed quite drastically with the advent of the Whigs. King William IV called upon Lord Grey to form a government and in early 1831 the new Whig Ministry came to power. The Whigs remained in effective control of the British Government from this time until 1841. Under Grey's administration, Lord Goderich replaced Murray as Colonial Secretary and Lord Howick (the son of Lord Grey) replaced Horace Twiss. Howick, especially, was an energetic and forceful individual: "under his influence projects and interests which had long lain dormant sprang into life and activity."[59] In November 1831 an Order in Council was issued strengthening amelioration regulations. The Protector of Slaves was given the authority to act independently of appelas to inspect conditions on estates.[60]

The early 1830's not only brought energetic people to the Colonial Office but there was also increased agitation on the part of the Saints. On 1 July 1830 Henry Brougham presented to Parliament the Anti-Slavery Society's petition for immediate abolition, as he appealed to "the law written by the finger of God on the heart of man."[61] The official

reception was cool; Peel commented that the Government still hoped that the colonies would begin to improve their amelioration schemes.[62] In 1831 George Stephen and James and Emmanuel Cropper formed a committee of lecturers to crisscross the country attacking the evils of slavery.[63] The general election of 1831 provided a large majority for the Whigs. This paved the way for the Reform Bill and the dimunition in the West India interest in Parliament. The bloody suppression of the February 1832 Negro uprising in Jamaica further aided the cause of the abolitionists. The new government was moving ineluctably toward the decision to proceed with emancipation. As Taylor wrote: "The howlings and wailing of the saints were seen to be supported by unquestionable facts, officially authenticated; the cry for the abolition of slavery waxed louder every year."[64]

With a Reformed Parliament, the product of the December 1832 general election, it appeared to be an era ready and willing to undertake reform. The British philanthropic movement was careful not to go too far in its attempts to widen opportunities and promote self-reliance at home because there was a chance that this would undermine not only the old regime but also the prevailing justifications for inequality and social rank. It was considerably safer to focus their attention and garner support on a distant symbol of patriarchal society -- West Indian slavery. Only so much could be done at home without threatening the social order. Their benevolent emotions were channeled toward the remote paradigms of suffering and exploitation.[65] It might also be interesting to view some aspects of the anti-slavery movement as performing a dual funtion; associating inhumanity with an economically outmoded system of agricultural production and also serving as a needed outlet

for all the fears and emotions which were the products of the vast social changes of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

The question remained, once abolition had been decided, as to whether it would be immediate or gradual. There was a general feeling, shared by many government officials, that economic and social chaos would result from abrupt emancipation.[66] It was feared that the freed slaves would abandon the estates and retreat geographically and culturally into the unoccupied areas of the colonies. Not only would such a separation from the estates be economically detrimental to the planters, but it would also cut the Negro off from progressive civilizing forces such as the Christian missionaries. Henry Taylor was more concerned about this problem than Stephen who advocated immediate abolition. Taylor recalled what sudden emancipation had done to the society in St. Domingue, the violence and tyranny of the "Code Henri", and wished to avoid these consequences in British colonies.[67]

The first Colonial Office plan for emancipation was formulated by Lord Howick in 1831. He addressed himself to the persistent fear that the freed slaves would not work for low wages on the plantations because of the availability of large tracts of unoccupied land. Howick's plan called for placing a high enough tax on all cultivated land not previously used for growing cane so as to force the Negroes to remain on the estates to work for wages instead of becoming small landowners. The money collected through this tax would be used to help guarantee loans to distressed planters. His plan also intended to protect planter interests through strict vagrancy laws.[68] It is not surprising, with the popularity of Edward Gibbon Wakefield's theory of the need for a

sufficient price for land, that Howick would see a land tax as a way to solve the problem. This scheme was rejected by the British government, especially after reports from the colonial governors concluded that such a tax on Negro provision grounds would be exceptionally difficult, it not impossible, to collect. Another shortcoming of the plan was its failure to take into account the need to improve the lot of the Negroes.[69]

Taylor proposed a modified version of the Spanish coartado system of compulsory manumission. The British government would purchase the slave's freedom for Monday and Tuesday and with the money he made on those days, the slave could gradually purchase his freedom day by day -- a sort of self-accelerating process of emancipation. It was estimated that for able-bodied slaves this would take three years. The whole purpose of this scheme was first to avoid the confusion and violence which Taylor feared would attend immediate emancipation, and secondly to educate the Negroes so that they would acquire, as free laborers, habits of "self-command and voluntary industry." The Negro would thus be "saved from a life of savage sloth and the planter from ruin."[70] This scheme was also killed internally in the Colonial Office largely through the efforts of Lord Howick who opposed any 'in between' state and saw other loop-holes in the system like the lack of provision for the sick and infirm slaves for purchasing their own freedom.[71] In retrospect, Taylor remained convinced of the soundness of his plan, although he admitted that it was perhaps not politically feasible to have been adopted because it would not have been acceptable to either the saints or the planters.[72]

On 27 March 1833 Goderich became Lord Privy Seal and Lord Stanley resigned as Chief Secretary for Ireland to replace him. James Shaw-Lefevre replaced Howick. Taylor commented: "The immediate effect of the change was to deprive Stephen and myself of our usurped functions, and remand us to our original insignificance."[73] Stanley was not very knowledgable on West Indian affairs, yet he insisted on actively running the West India operations. His chief advisor and confidant was Sir James Graham. Again Taylor: "I doubt if either of them [Stanley and Graham] had more knowledge of the matter than might have come to them casually in Parliament and in the newspapers."[74]

Lord Stanley was an excellent parliamentary debater, an aristocrat contemptuous of "the noisy self-complacent commonplaces, the Philistine view of things in general which is seen to characterize the dominant party . . . the shallow self-laudation, the smug optimism of the English middle class . . . the general obtrusiveness, the unconscious impertinence and the whitey-brown monotony of newspaper Liberalism." It is not difficult to see why Taylor and Stephen referred to him as "our oppressor."[75] It was also such an attitude that lead to his resignation, along with Goderich, Graham and Richmond, in May 1834 over the Whig Government's plans to divert some of the wealth of the Protestant Church of Ireland for social purposes.[76]

Stanley quickly recognized the necessity of securing Stephen's expertise on West India and slave matters. Even after his advice, Stanley ordered that Stephen should not be allowed to see any public documents except those that were officially referred to him as counsel for the Colonial Office.[77]

The Colonial Secretary was a firm believer in the supremacy of the imperial Parliament. Its role in an emancipation scheme was justified

by the historic precedents of the abolition of the slave trade in 1807 as well as the recent obdurate stand of the colonies in regard to slave amelioration, "a species of compliance worse than a mockery."[78] The Act that was passed embodied the prevalent belief that some intermediate period of quasi-coercion was economically and socially necessary. Stanley's original proposal called for the following: slavery as a legal status was to cease; slave codes were to be abolished; an apprenticeship system was to be instituted -- in return for food, clothing and lodging, but without wages, the ex-slaves were to work for their former owners seven and a half out of ten hours of the day, the remaining two and one half hours they were free to work for wages; this period of apprenticeship was to last twelve years for praedial or field hands and seven years for non-praedial laborers; the whole system would be inspected by a group of special magistrates sent out from England responsible for enforcing the provisions of the act; finally, a loan of fifteen million pounds sterling was to be advanced to the planters.[79] The key to the act was the apprenticeship system which was designed to train the Negroes for freedom and also serve as some form of compensation for the planters.

The Act of Abolition as passed on 28 August 1833 to go into effect 1 August 1834, embodied most of Stanley's proposals with the following changes: the period of apprenticeship was reduced from twelve to six years for praedials and from seven to four years for non-praedials; and the loan provision was changed to an outright grant of twenty million pounds as compensation for the loss. The Act was not meant to be comprehensive; it was left up to the colonial legislatures to enact laws governing the work and conduct of the apprentices and the duties of the special magistrates.

According to Taylor, all the more enlightened aspects of the Abolition Act were due to Stephen's influence and all its shortcomings Stanley was responsible for: "I doubt if a great measure was ever brought into the world by a minister of the Crown of which one could say that the responsibility for all that was evil in it had been so undividedly as well as wantonly and perversely incurred, and the credit for what was good so surreptitiously obtained."[80] Such a harsh judgment of Stanley seems unwarranted, but the difficulties of working the apprenticeship system soon became apparent. The adoption of this intermediate status, as mentioned above, was a result of the fear that the Negroes would flock to vacant land in the colonies. It seems more reasonable to have divided the West Indies into those areas where wholesale desertion would possibly take place, the newer colonies like Trinidad and British Guiana where land was available, and those, the older ones, where population density and land use made such a fear unrealistic. In the former the rationale for apprenticeship was more evident. As it turned out, Antigua and Bermuda abandoned the apprenticeship system immediately. Despite the fact that compensation for the slaves was dependent upon the acceptance of abolition, too much leeway was left to the colonial legislatures, which had frequently exhibited their attitudes in the previous decade.

The ultimate success of the abolition forces was due to a combination of factors: moral, political, social and economic. The anti-slavery party in England used them all. They had an array of resources and habits of mind particularly useful for their program. British abolitionists used every institution, every center of power, available to them. "Confronted throughout by formidable opposition from Tory,

military, West Indian, and High Church elements, Wilberforce and Buxton had quite naturally moved against it with other sources of power, similarly organized. Against pro-slavery peers they could rally their own anti-slavery peers; against West Indian power they could oppose the interests of the East India Company; they could combat High Church intransigence, especially after Wilberforce's conversion, with the phalanx of Low Church power then at their disposal. Available to them were some of the best legal minds of the day."[81]

Emancipation was a legal revolution providing civil but not practical equality. The social, political, and economic implications of this act were immense and they have reverberated throughout West Indian history ever since. What could the planters do? They were too few in number to resist imperial authority, rebellion was not feasible. Self-preservation persuaded them to submit and make the best of an unfortunate situation. Their economic power had been irreversibly sapped during the previous decades -- as Eric Williams has contended, neither the slave trade nor slavery would have been abolished had it not been for these severe economic difficulties. While it is true that the impetus for emancipation was diverse, the significant fact must be admitted that the humanitarian thrust coincided with the economic distress, and that drastic changes in the slave system aroused no opposition or apprehension among the new vested interests in the growing British economy. To argue that the humanitarians used the fulcrum of economics and the lever of an unproductive, inefficient agricultural system to hasten the end of slavery, does not deny the primacy of other factors in the abolition movement. In an era of reform, an "age of improvement" charged with moral prerequisites of evangelical Christianity, slavery was not only economically backward, but more importantly, morally and socially repugnant.

Despite the fact that emancipation brought an intermediate stage of forced labor, its rammifications cannot be underestimated. There were many limiting features to the Act, but its liberating function must be recognized. The humble field hand, who comprised the major part of the population, was now legally free to bargain with his employer, to live with his own family, and to control his leisure. A special magistracy had been instituted to safeguard these rights. The profound social and psychological implications of freedom -- for both master and slave -- the need to somehow re-orient and re-shape personal relationships -- to re-define what it meant to live in political and social community with each other -- this was the task set before all of the West India colonies.

Footnotes for Chapter II

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2. Elkins, op. cit., p. 52.

3. Charles Verlinden, "Aspects de l'esclavage dans les colonies médiévales italiennes," in Eventail de l'histoire vivante, hommage a Lucien Febvre, Vol. II, (Paris, 1953), pp. 91-103. Quoted in David Davis, The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), p. 42.

4. David B. Davis, The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1966), p. 60.

5. Ibid., p. 7.

6. Elsa V. Goveia, Slave Society in the British Leeward Islands at the End of the Eighteenth Century. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 205. See also Smith, op. cit., pp. 26-8.

7. Ibid., p. 237. M. J. Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), sees this as reinforcing the West African tradition of matriarchy. Goveia thinks that this is only partially true because the New World type of matrifocal family was much different from the West African model.

8. Elkins, op. cit., p. 81. In reviewing Elkins' book Eugene Genovese is appreciative of the author's description of the social-psychology of the slave, but highly critical of other aspects of Elkins' thesis. Genovese feels that Elkins overstates the contrast between American and Latin American slavery. The gap, according to Genovese, was far narrower than Elkins suggested. Cf. Eugene Genovese, "A Critique of the Elkins Thesis," in Civil War History, Vol. XIII, pp. 293-314; and Genovese's review of Elkins in Science and Society, XXV (Winter 1961), pp. 41-7.

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10. Ibid., p. 129.

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12. Philip D. Curtin, Two Jamaicas: The Role of Ideas in a Tropical Colony 1830-1865. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955), p. 4.

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15. William L. Burn, Emancipation and Apprenticeship in the British West Indies. (London: Jonathan Cape, Ltd., 1937), pp. 29-31. See also: L. J. Ragatz, Absentee Landlords in the British Caribbean 1750-1833. (London, 1928).

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17. Goveia, op. cit., p. 17.

18. Minutes of the Meetings of the West India Planters and Merchants, Vol. II, 31 January 1796, as quoted in Goveia, op. cit., p. 20.

19. Davis, op. cit., p. 292.

20. Ibid., p. 357.

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22. Ibid., p. 489.

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26. Mellor, op. cit., p. 82.

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29. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 121. See also Parliamentary Papers, 1824, Vol. 29, No. 433.

30. Mellor, op. cit., p. 91.

31. Hansard, 1823, Vol. IX, 257-307.

32. Goveia, op. cit., p. 49.

33. Curtin, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

34. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 121.

35. W. Burn, op. cit., p. 84. Christian Observer, Evangelical Magazine and Missionary Chronicle, Wesleyan Methodist Magazine, European Magazine and London Review, Monthly Review, and Missionary Notices. The more powerful journals which were anti-slavery included the Edinburgh Review, Westminster Review, and the Eclectic Review.

36. Burn, op. cit., p. 51, and Curtin, op. cit., p. 63.

37. Curtin, op. cit., p. 55.

38. Minutes of the West India Association of Planters and Merchants, June 5 and 9, 1823; quoted in Ragatz, op. cit., pp. 413-414.

39. B. W. Higman, "The West Indies 'Interest' in Parliament. 1807-1833" in Historical Studies, Vol. 13, No. 49, October 1967, p. 1.

40. Ibid., p. 2.

41. Ibid., p. 3, quoted from Volume II, p. 311 of the Cambridge History of the British Empire.

42. Ibid., p. 4.

43. Ibid., p. 6.

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45. See S. G. Checkland, "John Gladstone as Trader and Planter," in Economic History Review, Second Series, Vol. 7, No. 2, December 1954.

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47. Higman, op. cit., p. 7.

48. Ibid., p. 13.

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52. Burn, op. cit., p. 143 and Mathieson, op. cit., 227.

53. Taylor, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 101.

54. Ibid., p. 102.

55. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 184. In 1826 Alexander McDonnell, Secretary of the West India Committee of Planters and Merchants, echoed this view of compusory manumission in a pamphlet, The West India Legislatures Vindicated.

56. Taylor, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 94.

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60. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 200.

61. Burn, op. cit., p. 88.

62. Ibid., p. 90.

63. Ibid.

64. Taylor, op. cit., Vol. I, p. 103.

65. Davis, op. cit., pp. 335-7.

66. Burn, op. cit., p. 105 and Mathieson, op. cit., p. 227.

67. Taylor, op. cit., p. 104.

68. Ibid. and Curtin, op. cit., p. 90.

69. Burn, op. cit., p. 106.

70. Taylor, op. cit., p. 106.

71. Curtin, op. cit., p. 91 and Mathieson, op. cit., p. 234.

72. Taylor, op. cit., p. 108.

73. Taylor, op. cit., p. 108.

74. Ibid., p. 111.

75. Burn, op. cit., pp. 112-113.

76. Asa Briggs, The Making of Modern England 1783-1867. (New York: Harper Torchbacks, 1965), p. 269.

77. Taylor, op. cit., p. 112.

78. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 231.

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Chapter III

Amelioration, Emancipation and Apprenticeship: The Guianese Setting, 1823-1838

From the early 1820's on, Demerara, Essequibo, and Berbice were increasingly faced with the impingements of the British government on the question of slavery. The issue was not simply one of economics, labor or religion, but also involved constitutional and political problems in these colonies.

The decision to take increased action toward the amelioration of slavery was made by 1823 and in a despatch of 28 May 1823, Bathurst suggested to Governor Murray that the Court of Policy might wish, on its own, to enact an ordinance that was in accord with the wishes of His Majesty's Government.[1] Governor Murray himself owned a number of plantations in Berbice,[2] and was rather favorable to the planting interest. He was typical of that breed of West India governors who Taylor had characterized as sharing the opinion of the slave owners which constituted "to a great extent 'his majesty's opposition'" in that area.[3] Murray presented Bathurst's despatch to the Court of Policy on 21 July 1823 "in anything but a zealous spirit."[4] On 9 July 1823 Bathurst's first circular to the Governors of the West India colonies was sent. After considerable debate the Court of Policy decided, on 6 August, that an ordinance, prohibiting the flogging of female slaves and discontinuing the use of the whip in the field, ought to be passed. But no final decision as to the form of this ordinance was arrived at by the time of the seasonal adjournment.[5] During the course of the

debate, rumors spread throughout Demerara and Essequibo, among the slave population, that the King had set them free, but the planters were conspiring to deny them their freedom. This was but one further factor of disaffection in a slave population which in 1823 was almost fifty per cent African born.[6] In addition, a considerable number of the Creoles had recently been transported from their homes in the islands to work on Demerara plantations -- the inter-colonial slave trade was not abolished until 1825.[7] Many of the overseers of the Demerara plantations were still Dutch, which was a new experience for these island Creoles.

The Demerara coast Negroes also had the greatest contact with the Christian missionaries. The first missionaries to come to Guiana were two Moravians who visited Berbice in 1738. They were forbidden to Christianize the slaves and they turned their attention to the Amerindians of the interior.[8] In 1805 a Wesleyan missionary arrived in Demerara, but the Governor expelled him. The period 1807-1838 saw the stabilization of a society in which the élite valued things English and white.[9] This included organized religion and churches were one of the major instruments in the spread of these values. The great problem, however, was the danger religion brought to the slave system. The planting society favored and encouraged the 'safe' expression of religion, namely, the Anglican Church, while discouraging the Non-conformist sects.[10] The attitude was often ambivalent, as some planters argued that under missionary influence and Christian morality the slaves might become more tractable and peaceful.

In the early nineteenth century Hermanus H. Post, proprietor of Plantation Le Resouvenir on the east coast of Demerara, wrote to the

London Missionary Society requesting a minister for his plantation. In 1808 Reverend John Wray took up residence at Le Resouvenir with his main task being to Christianize the slaves and to teach them to read and write. Post's move was hotly debated. Some planters feared that Christianity and literacy among the slaves would only increase the chances of revolt. A few planters welcomed the missionary activity and Reverend Davis, another L. M. S. missionary arrived in 1809 to start a school in Georgetown. In 1813 Wray was transferred to work among British Government slaves in Berbice and in 1817 Reverend John Smith arrived at Le Resouvenir as his replacement.[11]

By the early 1820's there was considerable missionary activity throughout the territory. A fourth L. M. S. missionary, Elliot, was sent to the west coast of Demerara. Methodists had people stationed at Mahaica and Georgetown. Their reception, as noted above, was mixed. Many whites refused permission for the erection of chapels on their plantations; some interrupted services for the slaves, throwing stones at the participants.[12] Governor Murray interpreted Liverpool's order of 1811, which allowed religious meetings up to 9 p.m. only with the consent of the planters, to be applicable to Sundays.[13] The Governor had no love for the "sectaries," unlike his predecessor, Carmichael, who even contributed money to the missionaries.[14] Murray urged overseers to accompany the slaves to Sunday services to judge what they were being taught.[15] The majority view of the planters toward the missionaries was expressed by the Guiana Chronicle and Demerara Gazette on 11 February 1822:

> Let them be looked upon now more strictly than ever, and we pledge ourselves to do for them in proper colours whenever we may be furnished with the authentic particulars of any immoral or illegal wanderings from the path of their duty.[16]

Animosity towards the missionaries grew from the 1820's on as they were more and more associated with those 'evil elements' in the mother country so set upon the social, economic and moral destruction of Guianese society.

By the summer of 1823 the chapel at Plantation Le Resouvenir, administered by Rev. John Smith, was very well attended. It was this plantation and the adjoining Plantation Success which were the focus of disturbances that broke out on 18 August 1823. As noted above, the 21 July-6 August session of the Court of Policy had ended amid rumors of emancipation withheld by the planters. Circumstances at Le Resouvenir were ripe for some kind of disturbances. A number of slaves belonging to this plantation were advertised for sale to meet the debts of the estate and on the two Sundays prior to 18 August sermons were preached about this threatened dispersion.[17]

On Sunday evening, 18 August, in response to complaints of disturbances, Governor Murray visited Le Resouvenir to try to quiet the commotion. About forty slaves, carrying field tools, met him and demanded "unconditional emancipation." The forty were joined by another one hundred and sixty. Murray rejected their demands, returned to Georgetown and placed the whole district under martial law. The night of 18 August a number of slaves 'rebelled' on about thirty-seven estates along the Demerara coast. There was no looting or burning, some whites were imprisoned in stocks, their homes searched for arms, and two overseers were killed. The colonial militia, made up exclusively of white colonists, put down the disturbances cruelly and abruptly. More than one hundred slaves were shot to death in quelling the disorders; their bodies were displayed in chains and their heads mounted on pikes all

along the east coast. Martial law lasted for five months and forty-seven more slaves were hanged as the results of court martials in September.[18]

The Governor was convinced that the riots were plotted at Bethel Chapel on Plantation Le Resouvenir and that Rev. Smith was responsible. The incident was obviously the work of an 'outside agitator.' Smith was arrested on 21 August and held in close confinement. The missionary was already in poor health and was on the verge of leaving the 'steaming swamps' of Demerara for healthier climes. His trial began in October. The court martial concluded that the tendency, but not the intention, of Smith's religious instructions had been to foster discontent among the slaves. The crucial charge was that he was aware of the planning of the 'revolt' but did nothing to inform the government. Smith argued that he was at all times trying to discourage violence. The court martial found him guilty but recommended mercy. Murray submitted its findings to the Home Government. The latter, influenced by the storm of protest gathering around the case, plus the admission of a great deal of hearsay evidence at the trial, ordered a reprieve. This despatch arrived too late as Smith died in jail in early 1824.[19]

The Smith case was a cause celebre for some time in England. It was a great symbol of an innocent man condemned by evil slave owners. Brougham delivered a series of eloquent attacks on Guiana.[20] The incident had its reverberations in the colony as well. The planters were now more firmly convinced of the sedition preached by the missionaries and their fears of a servile revolt seemed justified. The reform proposals of the summer of 1823 were tabled. There were some who defended Smith, like the Rev. Austin, Anglican clergyman and chaplain to the garrison

in Georgetown. Austin was a member of the commission appointed to examine the evidence surrounding the revolt. He became convinced of Smith's innocence and in the face of mounting opposition, spoke out on his behalf. Of the uprising, Austin wrote: "Nothing but those religious impressions which under Providence Mr. Smith has been instrumental in fixing, nothing but those principles of the gospel of peace which he had been proclaiming, could have prevented a dreadful effusion of blood here and saved the lives of those very persons who are now, I shudder to write it, seeking his life."[21]

The violent reaction which seemed to attend the relatively modest melioration proposals of the British Government created a mood of hesitation in London. The British Government was very fearful of raising exaggerated expectations among the slaves. They concluded that there ought to be no coercion of the assemblies to pass Bathurst's proposals. In 1824 Canning remarked that he was not ready to exercise the supremacy of Parliament to chastise "petty refractoriness"; he would rather use "temperate but authoritative admonition."[22]

Benjamin D'Urban, Lt. Governor of Antigua, arrived as Lt. Governor of Demerara and Essequibo on 24 April 1824. While always referred to as Governor, the chief executive of these territories was technically only a Lieutenant Governor, under the jurisdiction of the Governor of the Southern section of the British West Indies. This was but a formality, as in all cases the Lt. Governor of Demerara and Essequibo, and later of British Guiana, acted totally independent of any authority but that of the Colonial Office. Immediately upon his arrival, D'Urban was involved with a host of unsolved and interrelated issues: the power of the Court of Policy, not just in theory but concerning the

question of slave amelioration; the thorny constitutional role of the Combined Court, exasperated since the time of Carmichael's tampering; and the question of union with Berbice.

Consistent with other West India legislatures, the Court of Policy's colonial members continually insisted on the unequalled right of that body to legislate on all matters of local jurisdiction. They argued that this right was guaranteed under the terms of the capitulation of 1803. The Colonial Office always denied this contention, although at times more vigorously than others. The question was a persistent irritant in the relations between Georgetown and London.

The most immediate practical concern was the need to respond to the demands of the British Government for the adoption of its slave amelioration proposals. Bathurst's instructions of 1823 were immediately proclaimed by Henry Beard, Lt. Governor of Berbice. That colony was ruled by a Council of Government composed of six members all selected by the Governor.[23] The power of the Crown was unquestionably supreme in legislative matters in Berbice and the endless haggling that beset the activities in the Demerara and Essequibo Court of Policy was absent there. It should be recalled that the Court of Policy of Demerara and Essequibo contained four official members, including the Governor, and four colonial members, nominated by a College of Kiezers (Electors), who in turn were selected by those colonists who owned twenty-five or more slaves or who paid tax on an income of 10,000 guilders or more. Since 1812 the six Kiezers were also considered the Financial Representatives and joined the Court of Policy to form the Combined Court when matters of taxation and expenditure were considered. Thus, on such financial matters there was a potential non-official majority of ten to four.

On 16 March 1824 the British Government issued an Order in Council for Trinidad embodying Bathurst's two circulars and also including the appointment of a Protector of Slaves, compulsory manumission, and provisions for the fining, imprisonment and forfeiture of all slave property of an owner who was twice convicted of any cruel or unlawful punishment of his slaves.[24] In November 1824 this Order was transmitted to Georgetown to be adopted and adapted to Dutch law. D'Urban was almost as unsympathetic to plans for abolition as Murray. He felt that the slaves were totally unfit for emancipation, yet intelligent enough not to allow the question to be discussed safely.[25] During the summer of 1825 Session, the Court of Policy did debate the issue for several weeks and finally passed "an Ordinance for the religious instruction of slaves and for meliorating their condition," to take effect on 1 January 1826. The terms of this act established a Protector of Slaves; provided that there be no required work from sunset Saturday to sunrise Monday; limited field work to 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. with a two hour rest period; flogging of women was prohibited; the maximum number of lashes allowable was set at twenty-five; a record book of punishments had to be kept; the slaves had the right to marry, to hold property and to purchase their freedom with the consent of their owners.[26]

This local slave ordinance did not include provisions for compulsory manumission which the British Government considered essential. The Court of Policy argued -- with at least the tacit consent of the Governor -- that any regulation that gave a slave the unrestricted right to purchase his freedom, regardless of his owner's wishes, violated their fellow planters' right of property which they had sworn to preserve

and which was guaranteed by the terms of the 1803 capitulation.[27] Bathurst accepted the 1825 code but sent out a draft ordinance for compulsory manumission. The Court of Policy agreed to simplify manumission procedures, and made it less expensive, but they totally refused to make it mandatory. The statement of the Court of Policy read:

> That, in its anxiety to conform as much as possible with the provisions of the Trinidad Order, it has, after the maturest consideration, found itself called upon by its duty to confine its deliberations to the object of simplifying the mode of Manumission, and rendering it as little expensive as possible, and particularly of securing to the slave thus manumitted his freedom in the most formal and unquestionable manner; it has felt it to be beyond its power, without the breach of a sacred trust, which binds its members to protect the rights and interests of their fellow-colonists, by whom they are nominated for that purpose, to give their sanction to any measure which could, even by construction, imply an acknowledged right on the part of the slave to demand his freedom <u>invito domino</u>. They feel themselves called upon openly to avow the principle, that they have not the right to invade the property of their fellow-colonists, by admitting that they can in any manner be deprived of it, contrary to the law by which it is secured to them, and which his Majesty has graciously been pleased to guarantee by the articles of capitulation on which this colony surrendered to his Majesty's arms.[28]

Planters bombarded London with petitions on this issue and they were joined in this endeavor by merchants and absentee proprietors of London, Liverpool, and Bristol. They demanded and finally were granted a hearing before the Privy Council in July 1827. The petitioners argued that compulsory manumission would mean ruin for the planting class, since once emancipated, the Negro would not work on the estate. They quoted the 1823 resolution of the House of Commons which called for the improvement of the slaves "at the earliest period compatible with

the well-being of the slaves themselves, with the safety of the colonies, and with a fair and equitable consideration of the interests of private property."[29] Compulsory manumission, they argued, was contradictory to this principle since it violated the right of private property. "The gentlemen I represent hold their property in their slaves as firmly and inviolably, and by the same legal title, that your Lordships hold your landed property in Great Britain."[30]

Lord Bathurst had addressed himself to the issue of free Negro labor in an 1825 despatch to D'Urban: "If it be said that the master may be thus deprived of the most useful of his slaves through compulsory manumission , on whose skill and intelligence he chiefly depends, it must be remembered that the price of the manumission of such a slave will be valued accordingly, and that the slave who has, by his industry and good conduct, saved enough to reach such a valuation, is not likely to relapse into a state of indolence: he will have given no unsatisfactory security that he has felt too much the value of regulated industry to be disposed to fall into such habits; and we may reasonably expect that he will willingly continue as a free man, to discharge, for adequate compensation, the same duties under his old master, which the supposition itself implies are not those of a subordinate character. It has been stated, that instances may occur of slaves being enabled to purchase their freedom, not by their own industry, but by the interposition of others. Whatever may be the motive for such interference, it cannot go to such an extent as to make any serious objections to the establishment of the regulation."[31] Mr. Adam, chief representative of the petitioners before the Privy Council proceedings, attacked this analysis. He marshalled a large amount of evidence pointing out that there were

no examples of any free Negro working on a sugar plantation in Demerara or Berbice. Furthermore, if one took the example of St. Domingue, where the Negro had been free for thirty years, it was apparent that sugar production had dropped tremendously. In fact, in an attempt to regenerate agriculture, a rather rigid and harsh rural code had just been promulgated in that territory. Adam also contended that the decline of sugar production that would attend free Negro labor in the British West Indies would only encourage the sale of slave-produced sugar of other countries. Before free Negro labor was introduced it would be necessary to develop those wants and needs among the Negro population which would motivate them to productive labor beyond a mere desire for subsistence. In British Guiana mere subsistence could be maintained with only a small amount of effort. The freed slave would quickly revert to an existence of barbarism.[32]

Given a certain set of assumptions and priorities, the arguments of the planters and their representatives made a considerable amount of sense. The sugar plantation needed a large amount of full-time, cheap labor. Manumission threatened this essential element and would therefore add one more negative factor to an increasingly dismal economic picture. But, as noted above, the plantation economy was already irreversibly sick and what was being witnessed in the late 1820's and 1830's were the final attempts of a dying institution to rally in the face of its own demise; a death which it consistently refused to recognize. The policy of the British Government was also short-sighted. They were trying to walk a middle path between the saints and the planters with the result of satisfying neither. They argued on the same economic basis as the planters, and with the same set of assumptions

the planters had better arguments. Bathurst's arguments ignored some of the realities of labor in the West Indies. The labor situation on the plantation was considerably different from that in England and prevalent English attitudes and theories in regard to the way labor normally behaved were inapplicable to this colonial setting. It was not until the British Government stepped into new areas of concern, when they attacked the morality and justice of slavery, that their arguments had a force and vigor unmatched by the planting class.

The representatives of the Demerara and Berbice planters reminded the Privy Council that if the Government continued in its policy toward eventual emancipation proper compensation must be given to the slave owners. Adam quoted George Canning: "I do maintain that we, having all concurred in the guilt of rearing and fostering the evil, are not to turn round upon the planters and say, 'you alone shall suffer all the penalty: we determine to get rid of this moral pestilence which infects our character as much as yours, which we have as much contributed to propagate as you; but you, as spotted lepers, shall be banished from our society, and cast to utter ruin to expiate our common crime.'"[33] The Government was responsible, initially, for slavery; they now had an obligation to see to it that justice was done to those who would suffer economic distress by its cessation.[34]

This appeal, plus the many changes in the Colonial Office, caused some delay, but finally 1830 and 1831 Orders in Council consolidated the slave codes and provided for compulsory manumission as well as the creation of an Assistant Protector of Slaves, the prohibition of the separation of relatives, and the guarantee of the right of slaves to appear in court as witnesses.[35] As with the other Orders in Council,

the colonists attempted to resist these on the constitutional grounds that only the Court of Policy had the right to legislate on such matters.[36]

This constitutional issue had plagued colonial relations in the 1820's but it had been decided to resolve it definitively with a new constitution when Demerara and Berbice were united into British Guiana. The motivations for union were both administrative and financial. Berbice was habitually beset with a governmental deficit. The Charter of 1732 did not provide enough money for the operations of the colonial government. There were two rather severe crises in 1796 and 1803 and at those times the debt had been met by the issuance of paper money. The same circumstance seemed to be presenting itself again in 1828 and this was the final impetus for union.[37] The plan was received with mixed emotions in Berbice. Many planters felt that Berbice interests would be swamped by those of Demerara and Essequibo; others were more than ready to acquire a greater voice for the planting interest through a Court of Policy and Combined Court, instead of the Governor-controlled Council of Government of Berbice.[38]

The Colonial Office was at this time just developing a policy toward the "Crown Colonies" (which usually referred to those colonies acquired during the Napoleonic Wars.) Horace Twiss, Parliamentary Under-Secretary to Sir George Murray, wanted to adopt a uniform policy for them all. James Stephen thought this absurd: "It is difficult to imagine any two civil societies more remote from each other than those of St. Lucia and the Cape of Good Hope . . . . Between Mauritius and Demerara the distinctions, though less marked, are of great magnitude."[39]

The Government finally decided to effect union in 1831 by a new commission and set of instructions to Sir Benjamin D'Urban. Despite Stephen's protests that it involved "a thousand absurdities,"[40] it was decided to extend the constitution of Demerara to the new colony and to revert back to its interpretation prior to the Carmichael changes. The Court of Policy for British Guiana was enlarged to include a representative from Berbice. The College of Kiezers, now consisting of seven members, was made separate from the Financial Representatives. The right of the Court of Policy to legislate on local matters was recognized, but Britain retained the right to legislate by Orders in Council: ". . . We do hereby reserve to ourselves our heirs and successors our and their undoubted right and authority to make and establish from time to time with the advice and consent of Parliament, or with the advice and consent of our or their Privy Council, all such laws as . . . may appear necessary."[41]

The role of the Financial Representatives was defined as: "for the purpose only of raising, in conjunction with the Governor and Court of Policy, the colonial taxes to supply the sums required by the annual estimate previously prepared by the said Governor and Court of Policy, and of examining, in conjunction with the Court of Policy, the accounts of the Colonial Receiver-General for the preceding year."[42] It was obviously the intention of the British Government to circumscribe rather decidedly what they considered to be the usurped functions of the Combined Court. The debate over the role of the Combined Court continued throughout the constitutional crises of the 1830's.

In August 1831 elections were held for the seven member College of Kiezers of British Guiana. Those inhabitants owning twenty-five

or more slaves (again Carmichael's change to include those who paid a tax on an income of over 10,000 guilders was abrogated) elected for life, or as long as they were resident in the colony, the following: C. Bean, A. Jackson, G. Rainy, T. Barry, T. Blake, C. Spenser, and W. Fraser. This same constituency also elected six Financial Representatives for a term of two years: H. Bruce, P. Rose, J. Downer, D. Melville, J. Croal, and A. Glen.[43] The preponderance of English planters in these two groups was evidence of their overwhelming numerical majority in the colony by 1831. The new Court of Policy, after the Kiezers nominated six people (three groups of two) to fill the vacancies and the Court had selected three, consisted of an official and non-official section of five each:[44]

Official Section

Sir Benjamin D'Urban - Governor
Charles Wray - President of the Court of Justice
Charles Herbert - First Fiscal
Charles Elliot - Protector of Slaves

Colonial Section

James Johnstone - from Demerara
F. P. van Berckel - from Demerara
John Croal - from Essequibo
Thomas Frankland - from Essequibo
James Cameron - from Berbice

There was no constitutional provision for such a division of the colonial section by area, but it operated through an informal gentlemen's agreement.[45] The constitution provided that no ordinance was to be enacted unless first proposed by the Governor; that no change in the constitution was acceptable without London's approval; and that no taxes on the trade or shipping of the United Kingdom were acceptable. The Governor was given the authority, with the advice and consent of the Court of Policy, "to make, enact, ordain and establish laws for

the order, peace and good government of the Colony."[46] As mentioned above, however, his Majesty's Government reserved the right to legislate by Order in Council when it deemed necessary.

The British Government also turned its attention to the much neglected judicial system of the colony. The Court of Justice, presided over by an appointed President, consisted of eight members elected by the College of Kiezers from among the merchants and planters of the colony. This Court was the supreme judicial authority in the colony for all criminal matters.[47] Made up of merchants and planters, the Court had no necessary skill or training in law. This resulted in a number of rather strange legal decisions. A November 1831 Order in Council established the Supreme Court of British Guiana, presided over by a chief justice and consisting of two additional puisne justices. It was given jurisdiction over all the major cases in the colony. The Order in Council gave the Governor the authority, with the advice and consent of the Court of Policy, to set up "Inferior Courts" as needed.[48] In general, this new system of jurisprudence was well received in the colony. The tardiness and expense of the old system only inhibited the workings of justice. The Gazette in April 1832 welcomed the new system: despite the fashionableness of criticizing reform in general, it argued, all but the most obstinate sticklers for ancient institutions must see the salutary nature of this action.[49] A new Order in Council of 12 January 1832, concerning the conditions of the slaves, was sent to British Guiana. It reduced the maximum number of hours of field work per day to nine, and for children under fourteen and pregnant women to six. The food and clothing allowances were increased and the maximum number of lashes that could be administered was fixed at

fifteen.[50] A proclamation of the Governor issued this order in February. The colonial members of the Court of Policy protested this 'invasion' of their constitutional rights. In response, D'Urban published sections of Lord Goderich's despatch setting forth the opinions of the British Government in this regard. Goderich contended that the 1803 capitulation did not invest the Court of Policy with exclusive legislative power within the colony. Since it was issued during the time of war, it was only a charter and not a "solemn unalterable grant." In fact, under the Dutch, authority in the form of the States-General and the Stadtholder was supreme and was exercised from time to time on matters of importance. According to Goderich, it even seemed questionable if under the Dutch the Court of Policy had any right to legislate at all, except on matters of revenue taxation or minor local concerns.[51] The Colonial Secretary implied that his Majesty's Government had the authority and the will to back up this interpretation.[52]

It did seem that the argument of the British Government was sound. Charles Wray, the new Chief Justice, ruled that the King with the advice of his Privy Council had the right to make laws binding on the colony.[53] After all, the British Parliament had abolished the slave trade in 1807 and had consistently maintained their prerogative to interfere in the affairs of British Guiana by Order in Council or Act of Parliament. The 'illegal' changes made by Governor Carmichael had never been approved by the home government. But, by not acting swiftly in this regard, in fact, by not acting until 1831, the British did encourage the Court of Policy and the Combined Court to become entrenched in practices which London considered unwarranted and unconstitutional.

The delay in action, a product of attempts at conciliation and the time it took to develop a strong and effective colonial policy, only abetted this process and made it more difficult to try to end.

The perennial cry of ruin in the West Indies was echoed in the Guiana Courier of April 1832. The interference with the rights of property and the low prices of the staple products were ruining the colony. British Guiana could only hope to survive, according to the Courier which was universally regarded as the organ of the planters, if the duties on sugar were lowered.[54] The editor of the Government Gazette replied with a more tempered analysis:

> When a man buys land he calculates the profit on the produce. If this rises land increases in value, if it falls it is of course of less value. In the course of twenty-five years the amount of produce extracted from the soil by the sweat of the brow of the planter -- yes, of the planter, not of the predial labourer -- doubled itself, and the importation of sugar into Great Britain increased from 100,000 to 180,000 tons. With the increase of importation has come a gradual decline in price. Here is the cause of the depression. The interference with hours of labour was more than compensated by machinery, which greatly contributed to the over production. The property of the West Indies can never be restored to its former extravagant estimate. It is not in the power of the government to alter it, however it may be inclined. Fume, fret and protest as we may, the affairs of the proprietary must settle down to the present price of produce, and those who have unfortunately pledged their estates when prices were high must submit to the altered circumstances. It will not be the first time the colony has suffered in a similar way. The change in prices of cotton occasioned by the termination of hostilities actually swept away some of the finest estates on the Coast, but this was not occasioned by the government. As to raising estates to their former value, the thing is not only ridiculous but impossible.[55]

The "West India Question" was the subject of heated debate and pamphlet warfare during this period. The planters were under attack

from both the anti-slavery forces and those who favored the end of their sugar monopoly. In 1825 sugar from Mauritius was admitted at the West India rate.[56] The arguments used by the planters for the maintenance of their special monopoly in the domestic market were relevant to another era. The East India interest eloquently argued that not to do away with the West India monopoly would be to prop up decrepit enterprises, "to bribe a parcel of slave-holders to continue in a losing business."[57] The state of the West India colonies was the subject of three intensive investigations by the Board of Trade in 1830, and two parliamentary inquiries of 1831 and 1832.[58]

These inquiries concluded that the distress of the West India colonies was due to a number of factors: competition from Cuba and Brazil, where there was a favorable combination of rich soil and a labor supply replenished by the slave trade; over-production of sugar in the British West India colonies; the increase of sugar from Asia, coupled with the equalization of rates on sugar from Mauritius, and finally the complex, antiquated system of credit which tied the planter to the British merchant. The older colonies also suffered because of the increased competition from Trinidad and British Guiana.[59] Although William Huskisson reversed the old prohibition against direct trade with Europe, these other factors mitigated against this apparent economic boon. By the 1820's most of the planters in the West Indies were hopelessly in debt to British agents and "these creditors would brook no agreements [like direct trade with Europe] which might impair the security of loans whose repayment was already problematical and which would give others the profits of handling shipments from encumbered estates. They held the whip hand. The West Indians were helpless and found themselves in the position of bailiffs to their representatives on their own estates."[60]

On 2 May 1833 Sir Benjamin D'Urban left Georgetown to assume his new position as Governor of the Cape Colony. The Gazette spoke highly of his accomplishments and a public dinner was held in his honor. He certainly had exhibited a sympathetic understanding for the plight of the planters and was not in favor of too rapid a push toward emancipation. His tact and personality enabled him to pursue a difficult course of upholding the supremacy of the British Government amidst a hostile and alienated colonial setting.[61] He did little, however, to deal with the increasing discontent among the slave population, the product of all kinds of rumors from England about emancipation and the growing activity of the missionaries.[62]

Major-General Sir James Carmichael Smyth arrived as the new Lt. Governor on 22 June 1833. He came from the Bahamas where he had been especially popular with the free people of color who considered him a champion of their rights.[63] Immediately upon arrival Smyth undertook a policy of conciliation and mediation between masters and slaves. In an address to the slaves on 27 June he promised to grant expeditiously to them whatever rights Parliament might guarantee, but he urged them not to be impatient or disobedient to their masters, nor to take part in rioting or illegal assemblies. The Governor warned the slaves to be wary of false rumors and reminded them of the progress that had been made under the amelioration program.[64] Smyth's proclamation met with instant approval in the Gazette, but the colonial members of the Court of Policy were piqued that the proclamation had been issued without consulting them.[65] They had become jealous guardians of what they considered to be their constitutional prerogatives.

The Abolition Act, passed by Parliament in August 1833, was published in British Guiana on 19 October 1833. Immediately upon

receipt of the terms of emancipation, the planters, through the Agricultural Society of the colony, began petitioning Parliament that a 'fair' share of the compensation be given to the Guiana planters.[66] The planters were not only upset at the fact of emancipation, but many also felt that the apprenticeship system was too vague and unworkable. Throughout the very difficult period prior to 1 August 1834 Governor Smyth was occupied in trying to allay the fears of the planters as well as calling upon the slaves to remain obedient and docile.[67] Writing to the Gazette on 19 June 1834, one planter, William Hilhouse, painted a gloomy picture: "I say, levy your spirit duty -- strike your cordon -- arm the police of the interior -- and promulgate your vagrant laws with such a force to back them as may make opposition hopeless. It is notorious that something like a strike is in contemplation. We know 'Quashy,' his soul yearns for his cassada field and fish pot. It is not by starvation, or the introduction of foreigners, that the future population can be induced to perform a reasonable day's labour, but by the firm and decisive exertion of legislatorial authority, and the fixed administration of the proprietors of the soil to enforce it."[68] On 21 June another letter from Hilhouse contended that only the Negro race was fit for field work in the tropics and all schemes for bringing in European laborers were doomed. In a third letter he spoke of the manners of the Negro majority as "fiddling, drinking, dancing, and sleeping," and that the proper habits and attitudes of conscientious labor could only be insured through coercion. The European was the director, the Mulatto the artisan, and the Negro the tiller of the soil.[69]

The workings of the Apprenticeship System, complex enough for the planter, required a considerable amount of explanation for the soon-to-

be-freed slave. Governor Smyth undertook the task to explain to the Negro that as of 1 August 1834 he was legally free but also legally bound to work for his former owner, if he was a field hand, until 1 August 1840. Such a nuance was difficult to convey. The reception of the new state of affairs in August 1834 was much better than the critics had anticipated. Some Negroes did refuse to work, but on the whole most accepted their new status. The most serious incident occurred in Essequibo. On 8 August 1834 a Justice of the Peace sentenced four women of Plantation Vreed-en-Hoop to the treadmill for three weeks to one month for "riotous behavior" and refusing to work. On 9 August, workers in Trinity Parish struck from work and seized a local church. Forty soldiers were sent to restore order and Smyth arrived on the scene with them. The Governor addressed these workers at Plantation Richmond in a "firm and temperate" manner and induced most of them to go back to work. The ring-leader, a "Captain" Damon and twenty-nine others were arrested and taken to Georgetown for trial. Damon was hanged for insurrection and the others jailed, later to be pardoned by Smyth.[70] James Rodway, nineteenth century historian of the colony and favorable to the planting interests, has commented on this episode: ". . . it was clearly discernible that a few crafty and designing leaders had inveigled the culprits into disobedience by the promulgation of falsehoods with respect to their rights and immunities."[71] Clearly there was a general lack of understanding as to what precisely the "rights and immunities" of the new apprenticed laborers were. One of the main reasons for this ambiguity was that the Act of Abolition had left it up to the various colonial legislatures to define these obligations. Governor Smyth handled the situation

extremely well, especially in comparison with the blood-bath precipitated by Governor Murray's decisions in the 1823 troubles. Smyth had a much better rapport with and possessed the general confidence of the Negro population. He continually saw delegations of the apprentices to explain to them their rights and obligations, as he viewed them, in the new situation.[72] He was frequently issuing proclamations expanding on the new state of society and the consequent rights and obligations of all, masters and servants, to make the system work. The active role of the Governor, especially his sympathy for the position of the Negroes, upset the planting interest. The Court of Policy and the planters generally looked upon the actions of Smyth as interference with their rights. The Court felt it should have issued the proclamations and the masters themselves explain their duties to the apprentices.[73]

On 25 November 1834 a petition, signed by 1135 criticizing Smyth's actions, was sent to the Colonial Secretary. The petitioners contended that the "happy results" of the great experiment were being jeopardized by the "imprudent, agitating, unwise action of the Governor" which was creating disaffection in the minds of the laborers and breaking the traditional bonds of mutual confidence between master and servant, thus engendering a spirit of enmity. Smyth's actions, the petition continued, had placed "the property and interests of the colonists in imminent hazard."[74] The strained relations between the Governor and the planters, especially the colonial members of the Court of Policy, were the background of innumerable controversies, the most notable being the crisis over the 1835 Civil List, a full discussion of which will be considered as part of the overall constitutional-administrative crisis that was a result of emancipation.

The system of Apprenticeship, designed as an intermediary stage because of the general belief that the Negroes were unprepared for full freedom (and by this it was meant that they would leave the plantations, causing economic hardship for the planter), has been the subject of some debate as to its merits and effectiveness.[75] Perhaps the greatest handicap to emancipation and the British schemes of effecting it were the impasses created in the colonies. The Abolition Act called for colonial cooperation. The Colonial Office, firm in its insistence that the system work, was also firm in respecting the legitimate constitutional prerogatives of the West India colonies, even though this often meant frustrating confrontations. This was more of a barrier in the older colonies like Jamaica and Barbados which had a long and recognized tradition of internal autonomy. James Stephen had no love for the type of society that existed in the West Indies and certainly viewed the success of apprenticeship as more important than the preservation of that society.[76] Nevertheless, the hierarchy of constitutional values to which he subscribed made it very difficult for him to act when the demands of apprenticeship conflicted with the sanctity of colonial legislative institutions. This attitude weakened the force of the Colonial Office's policy. The dichotomy and the way Stephen resolved it, can be seen in the following despatch of Colonial Secretary, Lord Glenelg, to Lord Sligo, Governor of Jamaica, a despatch written by Stephen. The Colonial Office was informing Sligo of their reluctant disallowance of a Jamaica act of 1834:

> They [Her Majesty's Ministers] acknowledge and respect the general principle that to the Colonial Legislature belongs exclusively the enactment of the laws of which the operation is to be confined within the island . . . .

But this principle was to give way to such acts like the Act of Abolition, passed:

> on those infrequent, momentous exigencies in which, although the colonies are the immediate scene of action, the interests of the Empire at large are directly involved, in which, therefore, the right of interference, though usually dormant, is unavoidably called into activity . . . . The Abolition of Slavery and the subordinate measures required to make it effectual present a course of events altogether peculiar and anomalous. That great Act was nothing less than a National Compact of which Parliament was at once the author and the instrument, binding the People of the United Kingdom to the payment of a grant of unequalled magnitude. It also bound the emancipated Slaves to contribute compulsory labour for several successive years, while it imposed upon the Assemblies the obligation of reconciling by proper laws the duties of the Negro population as Apprenticed Labourers with their rights as Freemen.

And since the apprentices were excluded from the franchise, Parliament:

> assumed to itself a peculiar responsibility for the protection of that part of local society thus excluded from the ordinary guardianship of the constitution.[77]

The Colonial Office wished to work first through channels, that is, through the colonial legislatures. Action by London must always be exercised as a last resort. This attitude of tolerance allowed a significant divergence from the intent of the Abolition Act and increased the difficulties of working the apprenticeship system.

The amount of power and authority which the colonial governors had varied from colony to colony in the West Indies. The position of the Governor was succinctly described in this despatch by the chief executive of the Leeward Islands:

> It is a mistake to consider the constitution of a West India colony as similar to that of Britain. The only mode of communication with a Legislature open to a Governor is either personal or by message. He has no ministry and no available patronage. In addition to a general dislike on the part of the local legislature to measures emanating from home, his recommendations to the Council and Assembly are liable to be dealt with capriciously, as one or other Colonial Party happens to obtain a momentary ascendancy. His best means of overcoming these difficulties consists in the acquirement of personal influence among the members of the Council and Assembly -- and at the very crisis when that influence is more than ever desirable the Executive has been left without adequate resources and without time to dedicate to its attainment.[78]

While this analysis was not totally applicable to the rather unique constitutional framework of British Guiana, it does serve to emphasize the importance of personal influence on the part of the Governor. In the case of British Guiana this would be of especial importance in dealing with the Combined Court where there was a possible non-official majority.

Most of the colonial governors in the West Indies were senior half-pay army officers and during the 1830's they were, in general, a dedicated, efficient group. In the words of W. L. Burn, "These were men of rare ardour and humanity who took the reputation of their country in their hands and, despite mistakes, saw that it did not suffer there."[79] Governor Smyth certainly fits into this category.

The operation of the Apprenticeship was to be superintended by a class of Special Magistrates, "men uninfluenced by the local assemblies, free from local passions."[80] They were to be sent from England, paid by the Imperial Government at the rate of £300 per year, and it was expected that most of them would be half-pay officers of the Army or Navy, as the act specifically allowed them to continue to receive that

compensation. Of the thirteen originally alotted to British Guiana (later increased to fifteen) only five were present in the colony on 1 August 1834. Governor Smyth was forced to appoint a number of colonial Justices of the Peace (45, three for each parish) to help deal with the exigencies of the new society.[81] An August 1835 Order in Council specifically exempted the apprenticed laborers from the jurisdiction of such colonial justices who were more often than not members of the planting class.[82] The Imperial Abolition Act of 1833 provided extensive but vague duties for this newly created class of Special Magistrates. Their responsibilities covered "the effectual superintendence of the said apprenticed Labourers, and the execution of this Act . . . and . . . any other Laws which may, in manner hereinafter mentioned, be made for giving more complete Effect to the same, exclusive jurisdiction over any offence committed or alleged to have been committed by any such apprenticed Labourer or his Employer in such their relation to each other" and over "the breach, violation, neglect of any of the obligations owed by them to each other" and over every "Question, matter or thing incident to or arising out of the relations subsisting between such apprenticed Labourers and the persons respectively entitled to their services."[83]

What precisely was the nature of these obligations which master owed servant and servant owed master? They were to be defined by the colonial legislatures. The Special Magistrates, often fresh from England, were uninformed of local conditions, grossly underpaid, and subject to all sorts of obstructions by the planters.[84] The control of the governors over inefficient Special Magistrates was also minimal. They recognized that their tenure would end with the end of apprenticeship; why should they work at their gruelling task to see the end of

a system which meant unemployment for them? There was no promotion and it was not until 1838 that it was decided to retain some of them to aid in working the free labor system.[85]

The usual cases which the Special Magistrates dealt with were on the one hand charges of laziness, insubordination and insolence, with the counter claims of severity, assault, of providing no medicine for the sick, or cheating praedials in the matter of working hours. They were constantly badgered by the planters, called before the legislatures to report on their activities, and observed by the missionaries.[86] And behind both groups stood the West India Committee of Merchants and Planters and the Anti-Slavery Society in London, and ultimately the Colonial Office and Parliament. Oftentimes they were called upon merely to act as mediators to help settle disputes out of court: "A Special Magistrate is not called on implicitly to enforce the penalty of the law in every trivial case that may be brought before him -- he may arbitrate and settle angry disputes and, by inducing a good understanding between employers and labourers, promote the real advantage of both."[87]

Their reports, monthly in the case of British Guiana, serve as fascinating evidence of the birth pangs of a new social order. When one considers that in 1834 of the roughly 100,000 residents of British Guiana, about 90,000 were slaves, the realization of the enormity of the legal and ultimately socio-economic revolution which the Abolition Act brought about is staggering. The Special Magistrates who crisscrossed the country-side were literally the midwives of this new society. Given all of the restrictions on their activity, inherent and imposed, they did a creditable job of seeing that the letter of the Abolition Act was

obeyed. On the large scale of positively advancing the tone of West Indian life, they, as a whole, had little effect. Most of them were successful if they could just hold their own in a hostile environment.

Despite all of the fears of riots, arson and general chaos that would attend emancipation, the transition was marked by peace and tranquility with but a few isolated exceptions. In a general outburst of relief, officials reacted, understandably, with a considerable amount of optimism. In a despatch of January 1835, Smyth wrote: "It is absolutely impossible that in any part of the King's Dominions any proportion of His Majesty's subjects to the same extent of numbers can conduct themselves better than the Apprenticed Labourers of this colony . . . . It would be difficult in the annals of the most civilised and best informed countries of Europe to select stronger proofs of the respect and obedience paid to the laws than are hereby daily afforded by the untaught and uneducated labourers who have so lately been released from the bonds of slavery."[88] The Gazette continually praised the success of the experiment. Governor Smyth's address to the January opening of the Combined Court was also optimistic.[89] In fact, Guiana's exports for the period 1835-1838 increased by nine per cent over the yield of 1831-1834.[90] It seems evident that the apprenticeship system did not adversely affect the economic position of the planters or the laborers. The planters were secured in their supply of labor; the laborers were guaranteed food, clothing, and shelter, plus whatever money they could earn on their own. But above all, the apprenticeship system worked because of the ancient traditions of habit. In the abstract the Negro was free, but this meant little to him as he was still subject to a system of forced labor. His condition had changed legally,

but in actuality it only appeared like one more step in the process of amelioration. The Special Magistrate was a welcome mediator, but the requirement that the ex-slave work on the estate of his former owner still could not be mediated away.

Governor Smyth took an active interest in the concerns of the laboring population, at times much to the chagrin of the planter class. An 1831 Order in Council required that slaves, who had formerly worked fifty-four hours per week, were henceforth to work only forty-five hours. Little had been accomplished in British Guiana toward effecting this by 1833 and Smyth urged an immediate implementation of the forty-five hour week.[91] In the Spring of 1834 Smyth appointed a committee of planters to draw up a table of work usually performed by the Negroes in a nine hour work day and to convert it to a seven and a half hour work day. With this fixed amount of expected work settled (e.g., it was expected that in a seven and a half hour work day a Negro would be able to "hole" thirty rods of field, or clean out 42 rods of small drains, or dig five hundred cubic feet of navigable canals),[92] a system of task work could be introduced. The Governor hoped that by introducing task work the laborer could finish his task by 3 p.m. and thus have his leisure time increased. Smyth also suggested that the Negro opt for a nine hour day so as to have both Saturday and Sunday off. But in Demerara and Essequibo the apprentices selected the seven and a half hour day, while in Berbice the majority chose to have Saturday off.[93] On the fertile island of Wackanaam, in the mouth of the Essequibo River, planters and workers signed contracts for the laborers to work fifty-four hours and to be paid for this extra time.[94] Smyth also presented gold medals to the managers of estates "in testimony

of the King's gracious approbation of their conduct towards the Apprenticed Labourers" attached to their estates.[95]

Under Smyth's tutelage, the abolition act which passed the Guiana Court of Policy, detailing the rights and responsibilities of masters and servants and the penalties for non-compliance, was the most liberal in the West Indies.[96] It provided for the forty-five hour week, allowed task work, and set the maximum punishment for apprentices at twenty lashes of fourteen days at hard labor. The ordinance allowed an employer convicted of maltreating an apprentice to suffer a maximum punishment of imprisonment for one month of a £20 fine to be paid to the apprentice.[97] Governor Smyth, alone among the chief executives of the major West India colonies, sent out instructions to the Special Magistrates which included a scale of labor that the apprentice was expected to perform.[98] This was of great help to the Special Magistrates who were frequently ignorant of local conditions and labor practices.

By June of 1835 voices were raised in Great Britain against the operation of the apprenticeship system. The Quaker leader, Joseph Sturge, and Birmingham Radicals began the attack.[99] In the House of Commons, Thomas Buxton attacked the supposed independence of the Special Magistrates, claiming that they were not free from the vicissitudes of local passions. Sir George Grey, Parliamentary Under-Secretary for the Colonies, replied that in some instances, especially in Jamaica, this was true, but that it had been due to a shortage of qualified magistrates and the situation was being redressed.[100] At the urgings of the anti-slavery forces a Select Committee was set up in 1836 to inquire into the workings of the entire system. In its Report of August 1836, the

Committee, which virtually limited its investigations to Jamaica, was generally optimistic about the effects of apprenticeship. The Report did point out some obvious shortcomings in the system and found a certain degree of mutual suspicion and irritation between masters and servants, but contended that it was generally subsiding. The Report concluded with the hope that "nothing could be more unfortunate than any occurrence which had a tendency to unsettle the minds of either class with regard to the fixed determination of the Imperial Parliament to preserve inviolate both parts of the solemn engagement by which the services of the Apprenticed Labourer were secured to his employer for a definite period and under specific restrictions."[101]

The most ardent of the abolitionists had been dissatisfied with the 1833 Act from the start because it had instituted an intermediate state and not granted immediate and unequivocal freedom to the Negroes. The British Emancipator echoed this view: "Slavery has not been abolished -- the Demon has but changed its name and, under its assumed disguise, it still revels in its wonted recklessness of crime."[102] The attitude of the Colonial Office was expressed by one of its officers, James Spedding, in the Edinburgh Review: "In watching the progress of this -- the newest and noblest experiment of its kind -- we have seen the most sanguine hopes which . . . we ventured to entertain fulfilled one by one beyond our expectations and taking their place among established truths."[103]

Anxious to observe conditions first hand, even more so to gather evidence to support their case, four abolitionists sailed from England for the West Indies in October 1836. Upon reaching Barbados they separated into two groups, Joseph Sturge and Thomas Harvey went to

Jamaica, while John Scoble and William Lloyd proceeded to British Guiana.[104] The latter two arrived in Georgetown in December. Lloyd remained in the colony only a short time before going to Antigua and then Jamaica. Scoble stayed until August 1837. Governor Smyth courteously received Scoble, afforded him every opportunity to examine public documents, and granted him full freedom to travel and interview laborers.[105] Scoble made a preliminary report to Smyth in April detailing the inequities he had found to that point and the Governor forwarded it to Glenelg with the following comment: "I respectfully submit to your Lordship, that nothing can afford me a more satisfactory proof of the state of this Province than the scarcity of the complaints made known to me by Mr. Scoble, and the mistakes and errors which the greater numbers are founded."[106]

On the conclusion of his stay in British Guiana, Scoble sent Smyth a more detailed and comprehensive account of the working of the apprenticeship system with a list of some twenty-five suggestions for its improvement. Scoble felt that while the Governor administered the laws of the colony fairly, the "demon spirit" of slavery in disguise was too pervasive to be effectively combatted by the chief executive. He could, at best, under the present system, only curb its excesses. Among other "irregularities' Scoble listed: the hanging of Damon in 1834, the fact that pregnant women (absolved from work under slavery) were forced to engage in field labor, further the planters were brutal and capricious in their treatment of the laborers.[107] Commenting on this, Smyth remarked to Glenelg: "Your Lordship will observe, and I am certain with considerable regret, that the good which might be gained by the observations of a judicious and impartial traveller, is, in the

case of Mr. Scoble, neutralized by the haste with which he arrives at his conclusions; and, but too frequently, upon erroneous and inaccurate information."[108] Smyth admitted the existence of some evils and malpractices but not on the scale that Scoble maintained. But the Governor felt that the policy of the Government was to end them whenever discovered.[109]

Governor Smyth was particularly diligent in guarding against the mistreatment of the laborers. In a January 1837 despatch to London he reported that in the previous December there had been eighteen instances in which the lash was used on apprenticed laborers. He intended to see that this practice was ended. On 14 January 1837 he issued a circular to all Special Magistrates: "I have consequently to desire, that, in every case in which you may henceforth conceive it your duty to sentence any Apprenticed Labourer to punishment by the lash, you will transmit to me (as is done by the Chief Justice at the close of each Criminal Session, and by the several Sheriffs at the close of each Inferior Criminal Court) the particulars of the offence, together with a copy of the evidence; and that you will not permit the sentence to be carried into execution until you shall have heard from me, that I see no reason for not extending the mercy of the Crown."[110] The record of Governor Smyth's tenure is traversed with such examples of his deep concern for the conditions of the laborers and it was this attitude which earned him the animosity of most of the planting class, who obviously felt that the priority of his concerns was misdirected. On 4 March 1838, the Government Secretary of British Guiana announced the death of "the intrepid, the just, the signally successful ruler of this not most easily governed colony." In his reply to this

despatch, Lord Glenelg remarked: "There is no public functionary of the Colonial Empire at the present time whose continued services would have been of higher importance."[111]

The return of the four abolitionists to England signalled the beginning of an all out campaign against the Apprenticeship system. Sturge and Harvey published a book reporting the findings of their investigations, The West Indies in 1837. They compared the situation in Antigua, where emancipation had been immediate in 1834, to the horrible conditions, reminiscent of slavery, that existed under apprenticeship in Jamaica. They tried to show that the system was not working and that where it appeared to be it was only because of the courage of individual Special Magistrates. Their bias and selectivity in the choice of evidence is apparent. But it was the first time that British abolitionists had spent a long (five months) period in the West Indies to observe conditions first hand, instead of depending on the reports of missionaries. Eric Williams has criticized, and properly so, the sincerity of some of the abolitionists. Yet, here were four individuals who spent five months in a most inhospitable climate, traveling literally thousands of miles, interviewing a host of individuals, visiting hundreds of estates (in an age devoid of motorized transportation) and then writing a number of books on their adventures, all within one year -- surely their motivations do not fit comfortably into the Williams' thesis.

In November 1837 the headquarters of a movement to abolish apprenticeship was set up in London to the accompaniment of speeches castigating the flogging of female apprentices, the use of the whip and treadmill, and the prevalence of heavy sentences for small offences.[112]

During December 1837 and January 1838 sixty-four meetings were held in southwest England urging the end of apprenticeships.[113] On December 27, 1838, the first edition of the British Emancipator appeared. On February 20, 1838, Lord Brougham spoke in the House of Lords: "In the name of justice, in the name of law, in the name of reason, in the name of God, I demand that your brother be no longer trampled on as a slave." In reply, Lord Glenelg admitted that there were abuses in Jamaica, but he also pointed out that immediate abolition of the Apprenticeship system would produce "excitement, irritation and disturbance."[114]

To quiet domestic political agitation the British Government favored the end of apprenticeship in 1838. But the officials of the Colonial Office and the Ministry concluded that it should be left to the various colonial legislatures to take the initiative in this area. The Government was anxious not to have Parliament jeopardize the future relations between planters and Negroes by granting a freedom to the apprentices which the planters might be induced to bestow voluntarily themselves.[115] In this tact, the British Government was following their long-standing policy of trying to work through the colonial legislatures and not impose decisions upon them unless absolutely necessary. This policy had had mixed results in the past -- mostly bad -- as on a number of occasions Orders in Council were issued and Acts of Parliament passed to force the West India colonies into the proper mold. This policy worked in 1838. The British Government, through their official representatives, was able to employ its official majorities in some colonies and play upon planter disunity and competition in others, to effect the desired result.

If there was one major shortcoming in the British scheme of 1834-38, which became quite apparent in the crises in Guianese society after 1838, it was the preoccupation with the legalities of freedom, and little or not concern for the needs of constructing a new social order. These needs encompassed questions of education, technical advice and public health; the basic social and agricultural services of a free society. Colonial officials were burdened with the day to day operations of the system with little chance to plan effectively for the future. Even in 1848, Lord Harris, Governor of Trinidad, could write: "One of the many errors which have been committed since the granting of apprenticeship is the little attention paid to any legialation having for its end the formation of a society on true, sound, and lasting principles. That such an object could have been attained at once was and is not to be expected but undoubtedly, had proper measures been adopted, much greater progress might have been made. As the question at present stands a race has been freed but a society has not been formed."[116]

The abolition of that institution which was not only the economic, but also the social basis of all that had been considered normative in the British West Indies unleashed forces of change of an unparalleled nature in that region of the world. The colonial society was buffeted by a hurricane of such proportions that it affected every aspect of life in such colonies as British Guiana. The attempts to meet and come to terms with these new factors -- the series of crises of adjustment -- were all circumscribed by the overarching need to form a new social order, economically, politically and psychologically. It is to these

areas that we must turn, always remembering that while we speak of them in distinct categories, they were irretrievably bound together and defined by the necessities of dealing with a new society.

Chapter III Notes

1. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 126.
2. Penson, op. cit., p. 126.
3. Taylor, op. cit., p. 58.
4. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 127.
5. Clementi, op. cit., p. 100.
6. There were 34,462 African-born slaves and 39,956 Creoles. Smith, op. cit., p. 28.
7. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 129.
8. Smith, op. cit., p. 31.
9. Ibid.
10. Ibid., p. 33. See also R. Lovett, The History of the London Missionary Society (London, 1899).
11. Rev. E. A. Wallbridge, The Demerara Martyr. (Georgetown: Daily Chronicle Press, 1943), pp. 36-37. Also see Smith, op. cit., pp. 33-34.
12. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 129.
13. Smith, op. cit., p. 34.
14. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 129.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p. 142.
17. "Wray and Smith Among the Slaves" in Chronicle of the London Missionary Society, August 1823, pp. 175-177. See also Wallbridge, op. cit.; David Chamberlain, Smith of Demerara (London, 1924); and Thomas Rainy, The Life and Labours of John Wray, Pioneer Missionary in British Guiana. (London: John Snow and Company, 1892).
18. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 130; Ragatz, op. cit., p. 430; Smith, op. cit., p. 36.
19. Hansard (1824), xi, 961-1076; Mathieson, op. cit., p. 146; Parliamentary Papers, 1824, Vol. 23, Nos. 158, 333, 338.
20. Ragatz, op. cit., p. 431.

21. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 146.

22. Hansard (1824), X, 1048-1061.

23. Clementi, op. cit., p. 84.

24. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 151; Clementi, op. cit., p. 100.

25. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 154.

26. Rodway, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 280; Clementi, op. cit., p. 101, Mathieson, op. cit., p. 155.

27. Rodway, Vol. II, op. cit., pp. 280-281.

28. Proceedings Before His Majesty's Privy Council Against Compulsory Manumission in the Colonies of Demerara and Berbice. (London: J. Moyes, 1828), pp. 11-12.

29. Ibid., p. 17.

30. Ibid.

31. Bathurst to Sir Benjamin D'Urban, 9 July 1825. C. O. 111/103.

32. Proceedings Before H. M. Privy Council . . ., op. cit., p. 62.

33. Ibid., p. 59. This was a speech of 19 May 1826.

34. Ibid.

35. Rodway, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 281; Clementi, op. cit., p. 101.

36. Ibid.

37. Penson, op. cit., p. 128.

38. Rodway, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 284.

39. Minute of James Stephen, May 1829, C. O. 111/98. Also, Penson, op. cit., p. 130.

40. Minutes of James Stephen on Letter from the Attorney and Solicitor-General to Lord Goderich, 2 February 1831, C. O. 111/118.

41. Clementi, op. cit., pp. 86-89.

42. Ibid., p. 88.

43. Ibid., p. 89.

44. Clementi, op. cit., p. 89.

45. Ibid., p. 90.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., p. 94.

48. Ibid.; Rodway, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 287.

49. Rodway, Vol. II, op. cit., pp. 287-289.

50. Clementi, op. cit., p. 102, Rodway, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 287.

51. Penson, op. cit., p. 132, Clementi, op. cit., p. 102; Rodway, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 285.

52. Rodway, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 286.

53. Ibid.

54. Ibid., p. 287.

55. Ibid.

56. Ragatz, op. cit., pp. 364-365.

57. Edinburgh Review, February 1823, p. 219.

58. "Statements, Calculations, and Explanations Submitted to the Board of Trade, Relating to the Commercial, Financial, and Political State of the British West India Colonies," Great Britain, House of Commons, Sessional Papers, 1831, Vol. IX, No. 120. "Report from the Select Committee on the expediency of admitting the use of Molasses in Breweries and Distilleries," Great Britain, House of Commons, Sessional Papers, 1831, Vol. VII, Nos. 109, 207. "Report from the Select Committee on the Commercial State of the West India Colonies," Great Britain, House of Commons, Sessional Papers, 1831-1832, Vol. XX, No. 381.

59. Ragatz, op. cit., pp. 356-378.

60. "Report from the Select Committee on the Commercial State of the West India Colonies," op. cit., p. 674.

61. Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 1.

62. Ibid., p. 3.

63. Ibid., pp. 305.

64. Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 4.

65. Ibid., p. 5.

66. Ibid., p. 11.

67. Ibid., p. 12.

68. Ibid., pp. 13-14.

69. Ibid.

70. Governor Smyth to Thomas Spring-Rice, 20 August 1834, C. O. 111/132.

71. Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 17.

72. Ibid., p. 19.

73. Ibid., p. 21.

74. Smyth to Spring-Rice, 29 December 1834, C. O. 111/133.

75. W. L. Burn is considerably more critical of the workings of the system than is W. Mathieson.

76. Burn, op. cit., p. 143.

77. Lord Glenelg to Governor Sligo, 24 April 1836, C. O. 138/56.

78. Sir Murray McGregor to Lord Stanley, 5 May 1834, quoted in Burn, op. cit., p. 146.

79. Burn, op. cit., p. 147.

80. Ibid., p. 197.

81. Smyth to Glenelg, 9 January 1838, C. O. 111/151.

82. Burn, op. cit., p. 203.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid., pp. 213-231.

85. Ibid., p. 231.

86. Ibid., p. 212.

87. Sir William Colebrooke [Governor of the Bahamas] to Lt. Governor Henry Light 31 July 1837, C. O. 71/84; quoted in Burn, op. cit., p. 263.

88. Smyth to Spring-Rice, 22 January 1835, C. O. 111/136.

89. Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 24.

90. Burn, op. cit., p. 367.

91. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 272.

92. John Innes, Letter to the Lord Glenelg, Secretary of State for the Colonies; Containing a Report, From Personal Observations, on the Working of the New System in the British West India Colonies. (London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Green, and Longman, 1835), p. 5.

93. Ibid., p. 7.

94. Ibid., p. 10.

95. Smyth to Glenelg 19 April 1837, C. O. 111/151.

96. Burn, op. cit., p. 172.

97. Ibid.

98. Ibid., p. 194.

99. Ibid., p. 335.

100. Parliamentary Papers 1836, Vol. 15, No. 560; Burn, op. cit., p. 336; Mathieson, op. cit., p. 277.

101. "Report from the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the working of the apprenticeship system in the colonies, the condition of the apprentices, and the laws and regulations affecting them which have been passed," Parliamentary Papers, 1838, Vol. 15, No. 560.

102. British Emancipator, 27 December 1837, quoted in Burn, op. cit., p. 333.

103. Edinburgh Review, January 1838.

104. Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 30; Burn, op. cit., p. 333.

105. Smyth to Glenelg, 7 April 1837, C. O. 111/151.

106. Ibid.

107. Smyth to Glenelg, 8 August 1837, C. O. 111/151.

108. Ibid.

109. Ibid.

110. Smyth to Glenelg, 11 January 1837, C. O. 111/151. Floggings did decrease noticeably. In 1835 there had been 641, in 1836 there were 560, yet in 1837 there were only 103. Smyth to Glenelg, 9 January 1838, C. O. 111/157.

111. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 273.

112. A Report of the Proceedings of the Public Meeting Held at Exeter Hall on Thursday the 2nd of November, 1837, to Take into Consideration the Present Condition of the Negro Apprentices in the British Colonies. (London, 1837).

113. Burn, op. cit., p. 345.

114. Lord Brougham's Speech in the House of Lords on Tuesday the 20th of February 1838, for the Immediate Emancipation of the Negro Apprentices. (London, 1838).
Burn, op. cit., p. 348.

115. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 294.

116. Despatch of 19 June 1848, quoted in Burn, op. cit., p. 380.

Chapter IV

Emancipation: Colonial and Constitutional Politics, 1835-1843

Emancipation effected a vast revolution in the role and function of the colonial government. The activities and services of the Georgetown government had to be increased greatly to replace the paternalistic rule of the planters that had prevailed under slavery. The transition from a slave society to a free society introduced wholly new issues and concerns into the socio-political fabric of Guianese life. The abolition of slavery and the attendant crises of adjustment also permeated the old controversies about the nature of the constitution, the capitulation, the role of the Combined Court, and politics in general in British Guiana. Emancipation affected the voting franchise. Prior to 1834 suffrage was a privilege of those who owned twenty-five or more slaves. The end of slavery also meant a considerable decrease in the revenue of the King's Chest which had derived its principal resources from a head tax on slaves. This income had guaranteed a certain degree of financial independence for the government. As it was diminished significantly after 1834, this meant a greater dependence on the revenue raising functions of the Combined Court. This factor would be an additional lever for that body to use in its battle over constitutional prerogatives. Abolition aggravated the labor shortage and the planters, acutely aware of their distress, were ready to use every means at their disposal, including colonial politics and finance, to secure a more favorable labor situation. The constitutional-political struggle was but one facet of the vast adjustment Guianese

society was forced to make in the years immediately following the emancipation of eighty-five per cent of its population.

In order to understand the constitutional issues of the 1830's and early 1840's, some review of the constitutional history of British Guiana is necessary. If it appears at times to be a bit too detailed, the jargon too legalistic, the concern for minutiae too great, it is only because the participants in the constitutional crises that beset Guianese society exhibited such concerns. Prior to 1792 the government of Demerara and Essequibo was conducted under the terms of a charter granted to the Dutch West India Company. That charter expired in 1792 and it was in anticipation of that expiration that the States-General had reviewed a series of complaints of the colonists concerning the existing "arbitrary" form of government. Baron van Grovestins, one of the commissioners sent by the Stadtholder to administer a "Plan of Redress" remained in the colony after 1792 as the Governor. There was considerable debate in the colony as to the proper use of the "sovereign's chest" and the "colonial chest." The former was to be disbursed at the wish of the Governor, the representative of the sovereign. The colonial members of the Court of Policy complained that the Governor was charging the colonial chest for what the sovereign's chest ought to be paying. The Court of Policy, with four official members and the casting vote of the Governor, had the power to dispose of the revenue from the colonial taxes. Theoretically this might be done arbitrarily and against the wishes of the four colonial members. The colonists claimed that under the terms of the Plan of Redress, the States-General had given the colonists the right to determine how the money paid into this colony fund, or colonial

chest, was to be spent. Protracted negotiations took place between the States-General, the Governor, and the colonial members of the Court of Policy. The Government of the Netherlands finally instructed van Grovestins, in 1795, to confer with the College of Kiezers concerning what charges ought to be borne by the colonial chest.[1]

Before any definitive settlement could be reached, revolution overtook events. In 1795 van Grovestins resigned his post with the establishment of the Batavian Republic in the Netherlands. Fears of internal insurrection and the impending arrival of English troops, forced the members of the Court of Policy to meet with the College of Kiezers to review the situation. On 25 June 1795 it was decided that the colony fund should be administered by eight colony councillors, the unofficial members of the Court of Policy and four Kiezers. This group was to superintend the raising of that fund and to regulate its expenditure. This was the origin of the Combined Court. In the confusion attending the French invasion of the Netherlands, the colonists, with the Governor gone, took advantage of the situation to settle the dispute over the colonial chest in their favor. Governor Beaujon, the nominee of the Prince of Orange, agreed to work with this system until "the pleasure of his Sovereign was made known."[2] A further complication was added with the arrival of British troops and the surrender of the colony to Great Britain on 22 April 1796. The internal system of government remained untouched and the capitulation of 1796 guaranteed the colony its "ancient laws and usages." There immediately arose a controversy between Beaujon and the colonial members of the Court of Policy over the control of the colonial chest. The colonial members contended that the provisional financial arrangement of 1795

was part of those ancient laws and usages. Beaujon offered to compromise. In lieu of adding the Kiezers to this Combined Court, the voting inhabitants of the colony should elect, biennally, six financial representatives who would sit with the entire Court of Policy to vote on questions relative to the raising of colonial taxes. Beaujon argued that his plan was better than the other, because the Kiezers, elected for life, had no mandate to decide on financial matters.[3] The Court of Policy agreed to Beaujon's proposals and in June 1796 it abolished the terms of the June 1795 agreement and decreed that six financial representatives were to be added to the Governor and Court of Policy, "who are to vote on all matters relative to the raising of taxes and examination of accounts, without any other power whatever." The Court of Policy added: "That a resolution shall hereafter be determined upon, if necessary, under gracious approbation from a higher quarter, tending, as far as possible, to ascertain what articles of expenditure are or are not payable out of the colony fund, in order to establish some fixed regulations on that head, to be invariably attended to in the common course of affairs. The whole of these resolutions to be determined upon until his Britannic Majesty's pleasure, or that of his representatives, shall be made known."[4]

The minutes of this new Combined Court for the period 2 August 1797 until the restoration of the colony to the Dutch on 2 December 1802, and from then to the second capture by the British on 19 December 1803, show that the normal method of procedure was for the Governor to lay before the Combined Court an estimate of the expenses for the year, which had been previously prepared, and then for the Combined Court to decide on the taxes required to provide for that sum. Only in a few

instances were other items discussed; on the whole, the strict limits of the role of the Combined Court was maintained.[5]

The capitulation of 1803 again guaranteed those "ancient laws and usages" of the colony. But by 1810 the financial representatives were growing restless under their limitations. They wished to have a greater control over how the money raised by the taxes agreed to should be spent. On the 1 May 1811 meeting of the Court of Policy two financial representatives were admitted to present a petition from a number of colonists requesting that the sanction of His Majesty's Government be obtained for the addition of an increased number of colonial members to the Court of Policy and the abolition of the Combined Court. Governor Bentinck responded, after numerous inquiries concerning the fate of the petition, that since it did not contain the signatures of a majority of the inhabitants, the petition had not been forwarded to London.[6]

In April 1812 Bentinck was recalled and the Government was to be provisionally administered by Major-General Carmichael. The Earl of Liverpool, then Colonial Secretary, sent instructions to Acting Governor Carmichael:

> It is our will and pleasure that for the present the temporary administration of the settlement should, as nearly as circumstances will permit, be exercised by you according to the terms of the capitulation hereunto annexed (1803), and in conformity to the ancient laws and institutions that subsisted within the same previous to the surrender of the said settlement to us, subject to such directions as you shall now or hereafter receive from us under our Signet or Sign Manual, or by our Order in our Privy Council, or to such sudden and unforeseen emergencies as may render a departure therefrom absolutely necessary and unavoidable, and which you are immediately to represent to one of our Principal Secretaries of State for our information; but it is nevertheless our especial command that all powers

> of the executive government within the said settlements, as well as civil as military, shall be vested solely in you, our Governor, or in the person having the government of the said settlements for the time being, and that such powers as were heretofore exercised by any persons separately, or in conjunction with the Governor of the said settlements, shall belong solely to you, our Governor, or to the person having the government of the said settlements for the time being; and it is our will and pleasure that all such public acts and judicial proceedings which, before the surrender of the settlements to us, were in the name of the Seven United Provinces, shall henceforth be done issued, and performed in our name . . . .
>
> That if anything shall happen which may be for the advantage or security of the said settlements under your Government, which is not herein or by our commission provided for, we do hereby allow you to take order for the present therein, provided nevertheless that what shall be done be not repugnant to these our commission and instructions, giving unto us, through one of our Principal Secretaries of State, speedy notice thereof, that you may receive our ratification if we shall approve same.[7]

In a despatch of 12 February 1812, Lord Liverpool informed Carmichael that while he was to administer the colony as per the instructions received, it was nevertheless the intention of the Prince Regent to appoint a person from England as Governor in a short time. Carmichael was ordered to make detailed reports on the state of the colony. And on all matters connected with the receipt and expenditure of the colony's finances he was told that it was not advisable that any material alterations should be made in the general system of government that he found on the assumption of his duties.[8]

Despite these instructions, on 7 September 1812, Carmichael, with the concurrence of the Court of Policy, issued a proclamation embodying important changes in the constitution of the colony. There is some confusion as to who passed what as the records indicate that only the

Governor and three colonial members were present at this September meeting of the Court of Policy.[9] The preamble of the proclamation declared: "Whereas by virtue of the powers vested in me by his Majesty's instructions to alter and amend from time to time the laws and regulations of these colonies, subject, nevertheless to his Majesty's approbation, I have thought fit, by and with the advice and consent of the Honourable Court of Policy, to combine the Board of Electors [College of Kiezers], with that of financial representatives, and to extend the right of suffrage to all such persons that pay the income tax on 10,000 guilders per annum, who shall have an equal right to vote in all elections in the same manner as those who are possessed of twenty-five Negroes, as by the former regulations."[10] The provisions officially "enacted", however, only included the right of suffrage and the tenure of the combined board of Kiezers and financial representatives. There is no evidence of legislation combining the functions of the electors and the financial representatives, except the general resolution of the 7 September Court of Policy, of dubious constitutional make-up, adhering to the contents of Carmichael's proclamation.[11]

On 18 November 1812, in an address to the first meeting of this new Combined Court, Carmichael justified the changes and contended that he had received "particular orders from the Prince Regent, which, to the best of his abilities, had been carried into effect, as far as regarded his executive authority." He also referred to the "discretionary power at the same time vested in him" and that his proclamation was issued "in virtue of the powers vested in him by his Majesty's instructions to alter and amend from time to time the laws and regulations of these colonies."[12] The records of the Colonial Office do not bear out the

assertions of the Acting Governor. In fact, he was explicitly ordered not to tamper with the financial aspects of the way the government had been run. There is no evidence of any special "orders from the Prince Regent."

The main motives behind Carmichael's actions, as he represented them to London, was to make the government of the colony more like that of Britain, and consequently more 'noble' and 'efficient.'[13] Lord Bathurst, the new Colonial Secretary, was extremely agitated over what Carmichael had unilaterally effected. The Acting Governor was instructed to adhere strictly to the established institutions of the colony and "if indeed the laws and usages of the colony should appear inconsistent with the proper administration of the government it would be General Carmichael's duty to represent to his Majesty's Government the alterations which his experience might point out as necessary;" but Lord Bathurst observed, "I know of no case, not even that which you have stated, which can authorize a Governor in making such a material alteration without his Royal Highness's commands."[14]

While it was true that the governmental institutions set up in 1796 had not received the approbation of the Crown and derived their authority solely from the act of the Court of Policy of 1796 and therefore could be changed by a future act of the Court of Policy (Carmichael's contention); nevertheless, the capitulation of 1803 placed everything on a different footing. A new validity to the system of 1796 was imparted to it by the first article of the capitulation which stipulated that the mode of taxation then in use should be continued. In 1811 Bentinck had recognized this by insisting that any changes must be supported by a majority of the colonists and then receive the sanction of the Crown.[15]

The British Government, preoccupied with more pressing matters and personalities in 1813, let the issue drop with the erroneous belief that Bathurst's rebuke had been sufficient. The full effect of these changes did not become apparent until the 1823 Combined Court refused to liquidate a debt due to the Royal Treasury. Governor Murray then reported in detail on the effects of the system. The power of the financial representatives-kiezers was very great. Not only did they vote on the estimates and the colonial expenditures, but they also were the electors of the colonial members of the Court of Policy. The system had operated reasonably well up to 1823 due generally to the lack of disagreement on substantive issues. 1823 was a significant date, because it was from this time on that the British Government was continually involved in the affairs of Guiana, first in amelioration schemes, then with emancipation and apprenticeship, and finally with immigration plans and the organization of post-emancipation society. This increasing concern and involvement exacerbated relations between the colonial government and the colonists and made a working arrangement of the constitution, based on mutual agreement, impossible. There was no longer mutual agreement on the most important issue, the state and existence of colonial slavery.

Murray recommended that nothing be done about the peculiarites of the constitution until the proposed union with Berbice was completed. As a result of various delays, that union did not take place until 1831 with the instructions and commission sent to Sir Benjamin D'Urban. These instructions specifically disallowed the scheme of government that had been instituted by Carmichael and which had been the <u>de facto modus operandi</u> of the government ever since. The roles of financial

representative and Kiezer were separated. The Combined Court was only to vote the colonial taxes to supply the sums required by the annual estimate previously prepared by the Governor and the Court of Policy. The British Government pointedly reserved to itself the right to intervene, by Act of Parliament or Order in Council, in the affairs of the colony.

This change, attacking the privileges that had developed for the Combined Court, was resisted with determination. The financial representatives were extremely upset at the notion of being excluded from the function of participating in the control of the amount and appropriation of the colonial chest revenue, the taxes for which they voted. This resistance was carried so far that in 1832 the levy on the colonial chest for normal supplies was stopped by the refusal of the Combined Court to vote taxes for that fund unless the financial representatives were admitted to vote with the Court of Policy on the estimates.[16] D'Urban without formal instructions from the Colonial Office, agreed to the demands of the financial representatives, but stipulated that it was not to be misconstrued as a precedent. There was an obvious practical difficulty of which D'Urban was very much aware. The Governor could always secure the passage of the estimates, with his casting vote, if necessary, in the Court of Policy. But the Combined Court contained a possible unofficial majority of eleven to five and it could thus refuse to exercise its function of taxation. The British Government consistently maintained its assertion of paramountcy, but the supreme power of the sovereign was not invoked in 1832. This was due to what D'Urban and London agreed was a peculiar circumstance. The vital questions concerning slavery, which at that

time were undecided and obviously approaching a crisis, convinced Lord Goderich to exercise "the utmost forbearance upon all points in dispute with the West India colonies, and not to embarrass an object of such paramount importance by involving with it any minor controversies."[17] There was, therefore, no official disapproval of D'Urban's agreement to allow the Combined Court to debate and vote on the estimates of 1832.

The effect of emancipation on this long-simmering issue was immediately apparent. First, with the slavery question supposedly settled, the "peculiar circumstances" which dictated leniency and flexibility in dealing with the maintenance of British paramountcy no longer existed. Secondly, the main source of the revenue of the King's Chest, the head tax on slaves, had obviously been ended. The revenue that came into the King's or Sovereign's Chest was raised and appropriated by the authority of the executive government alone. This was quite distinct from the Colony Fund which was, at least according to the British interpretation of the constitution, determined and appropriated by the Governor and the Court of Policy, with the taxes by which it was to be raised indicated by the Combined Court.

At the very time when the revenue of the King's Chest was being depleted, and the constitutional demands of the Combined Court advanced, the need for a tremendous increase in the public services of the colony was necessitated by emancipation. The Government was called upon to superintend a vast apprenticeship system, and after 1838, to regulate, through stipendiary magistrates and police officials, the relations between two groups, masters and servants, who had no experience in dealing with each other in a non-slave society. Slavery had made the public administration very inexpensive. There was officially no poverty,

very little crime, no police force, no magistrates. All these matters were dealt with on the basic unit of the social structure, the plantation.

In addition to this unbelievably complex social adjustment matrix, the new Governor, James C. Smyth, who had replaced Sir Benjamin D'Urban in June 1833, was viewed with suspicion and even open hostility by the important colonial leaders because of his supposedly pro-Negro attitude. This personal animosity between the new chief executive of the colony and the unofficial majority of the Combined Court, coupled with significant policy differences, made the workings of an extremely cumbersome system of government almost impossible.

Governor Smyth's proposal in 1834 for the institution of a permanent Civil List to meet the increased yearly public service expenditures, especially the salaries of colonial officials, was rejected by the Combined Court.[18] The colonial members were already insisting that the Government (i.e., the Court of Policy with London's approval) agree to the enactment of rather stringent regulations for the conduct of the apprentices, measures which both Smyth and Stanley agreed involved "unnecessary coercion." The colonists were very much afraid of what emancipation would mean to their already aggravated labor problems, and they hoped to use their power in the Combined Court to get what they wanted in the way of pro-planter labor legislation. Colonial Secretary Stanley was ready to compromise on the right of the Combined Court to debate the estimate, if they would agree to an allocation of £17,500 for public services. The Combined Court was obdurate in its demands and refused to vote any taxes for the estimate of 1834. The colonial members especially rejected the notion of voting a permanent

Civil List, the burden of which they felt would surely produce economic ruin.[19] Again there was a constitutional crisis, but Governor Smyth was firmly on the side of London. The Colonial Office, with Lord Aberdeen at the helm in early 1835, was desirous of standing firm without needlessly aggravating the Combined Court.[20] Convinced that due to the personal strain between Smyth and the colonial legislature no compromise could be effected, Aberdeen decided to send Sir Lionel Smith, Governor of the Windward Islands, to Georgetown to mediate the controversy. To effect his mission, Smith would be granted the title of Acting Governor of British Guiana for the term of his mediation.

In a very long despatch of 1 March 1835 Lord Aberdeen outlined to Smith the history of dispute. The Colonial Secretary stated that Britain would act to secure the revenues required, by Order in Council if necessary, but only in the last resort. Aberdeen wrote to Smith:

> The preponderating power of the Crown in the Government of British Guiana which has hitherto subsisted, can only be maintained by the possession of an independent revenue sufficient to support the essential institutions of a civilized society without appealing to any popular and mixed bodies of the colony, or by the exclusion of the Combined Court from all functions, except those of appointing the ways and means and auditing the public accounts -- an exclusion which implies a supreme power in the Crown to take order for the execution of these functions by other means should the Combined Court refuse to discharge them.

The rights of the Crown must be maintained because of the "legal and moral condition of the community." This Royal supremacy was essential to protect the apprenticed laborers from "an independent irresponsible oligarchy."

> To render all civil and judicial servants of the Crown dependent on the Combined Court . . . would be nothing less than to impose upon the Crown the arduous task of limiting within the definitions of the Abolition Act the power of the planters over the negroes, and, at the same time, to transfer from the Crown to the planters the entire agency through which any effect can be given to the will or the measures of the Government.

It was therefore important not to have the Civil List limited in time; the presumptions of the Combined Court must be laid to rest.[21]

Sir Lionel Smith arrived in British Guiana on 27 May 1835 and temporarily replaced Smyth as Governor. In dealing with the colonial members of the Court of Policy (J. G. Reed, George Rainy, Charles Bean, John Croal, and Peter Rose), Smith very quickly concluded that it would be impossible to secure agreement for a permanent Civil List. The planters argued that uncertainty concerning the future economic prospects of the colony, due to the expected changes in society, meant that any Civil List could only be secured through the expiration of apprenticeship in 1840.[22] In private discussions with the colonial members Smith urged them to agree to a compromise; he showed them sections of Aberdeen's despatches which exhibited the determination of the British Government to act if a settlement was not reached.[23] At the June 9th meeting of the Court of Policy Mr. Reed proposed an annual Civil List of £20,980. The total and its method of allocation were quite acceptable to Smith. But attached to his motion were certain provisions to which Smith could not agree. First, the King's Chest would end as a separate revenue item and be combined with the Colony Chest. Despite the end of the head tax on slaves, the King's Chest still included revenue from such diverse items as customs dues and woodcutting licenses. More significantly, Reed's proposal stated

"that no further question shall be made, on the part of his Majesty's Government, as to the exercise, by the Court of Policy and the Combined Court, of those rights and privileges those bodies have claimed respecting the public expenditure and finances of the colony."[24]

After further negotiations a compromise was reached. A Civil List of £17,500 was voted for 1835 and for £20,980 for the next five years; ending on 31 December 1840:[25]

	£
Lieutenant-Governor	3,500
Chief Justice	2,000
Puisen Judges	2,300
Crown Advocate	500
First Fiscal	1,250
Second Fiscal	1,000
Ecclesiastical Establishment	850
Despatch boat and school aid	300
Contingencies	2,400
Retiring Allowances	2,400
	17,500

The difference of £2,500 between the 1835 Civil List and that of the next five years was in the addition of that sum to the retirement allowances.

In return for this Civil List, the Crown agreed to turn over all of the revenue of the King's Chest to the Colonial Chest for the period of the Civil List. The 'right' of the Combined Court to free and unreserved discussion of the annual estimates was conditionally extended by the Crown for the duration of the Civil List.[26] His task completed, Sir Lionel Smith left British Guiana on 17 June 1835 and Smyth re-assumed his role as Governor. Lord Aberdeen's device of using a third party as a mediator, and investing him with the authority of Governor for the period of his negotiations, had proved successful.

The Act of Abolition also affected the franchise structure in the colony. After 1 August 1834 no one owned slaves, yet the right to vote was based on the ownership of twenty-five or more slaves. On 2 May 1835 a new election ordinance was passed by the Court of Policy granting suffrage to all those who had an income of 2001 guilders or who paid at least 70 guilders (£5) in direct taxes.[27]

There were no really serious constitutional problems from this period until 1838. On 7 March 1837 the proceedings of the Combined Court were opened to the public.[28] Also in 1837 the official membership in the Court of Policy was altered. The Collector of Customs and the Government Secretary replaced the two High Sheriffs (Fiscals).[29]

On 4 March 1838 Governor Smyth died. He was temporarily replaced by Colonel Thomas Bunbury, who came from St. Lucia on 30 March to discharge the role of Governor until a permanent replacement was named. Bunbury was very much a 'planters' Governor' and in his eighty-nine day tenure a series of harsh vagrancy laws were passed with the intent of punishing all "idle and disorderly persons, rogues and vagabonds." Those individuals able to work but refusing to maintain themselves or their families, peddlars, hucksters without licenses, prostitutes and beggars, were all deemed "idle and disorderly" and subject to imprisonment at hard labor. Obeah practitioners, fortune tellers, collectors of alms under false pretenses, those who loitered about stores, were to be considered "rogues and vagabonds."[30] This entire set of ordinances was later disallowed by the Colonial Office. The Gazette, that newspaper which normally supported the executive of the colony, bitterly attacked Bunbury's administration for its subservience to the colonial members of the Court of Policy and the Combined Court. This attack,

however, came on 30 June 1838, five days after the new Governor, Henry Light, had arrived from Antigua.[31]

The whole issue of the Apprenticeship system, its successes and short-comings, was the subject of considerable debate in England in 1837 and 1838. The debate overflowed, quite naturally, into British Guiana. In an address to the opening session of the Court of Policy, 3 February 1838, Smyth reviewed the year 1837, continaully referring to "the tranquility and happiness enjoyed by the great mass of the working population."[32] But he was opposed to the "premature" ending of the apprenticeship status of the praedial workers in 1838. Smyth did raise the problem of the need to distinguish between praedials (field workers) and non-praedials carefully since the Act of Abolition ended the latter's period of apprenticeship on 1 August 1838.[33] The Governor communicated to London the opposition of the colonial members of the Court of Policy to the sending of commissioners from England to classify the laborers properly.[34]

Parliament had amended the 1833 Act to allow the various West India colonies to end all apprenticeship in 1838 if they so desired. But the British Government studiously avoided imposing this policy on the various legislatures. All of them decided to end the system in its entirety on 1 August 1838.

In June 1838, Michael McTurk, a prominent colonial member of the Court of Policy, moved that all apprenticeship end on 1 August.[35] The new Governor, Henry Light, favored the proposal. The confusion concerning the distinctions between praedials and non-praedials had increased and many planters did not relish the notion of having to deal with two different types of laborers. The planting class was not at all united

on this issue in the first place. Colonel McTurk, a major planter, had introduced it. On 3 July the Gazette reported that two planters, Mr. Glen of Greenfield and Mr. Stevenson of Chantilly had agreed to free all their laborers on 1 August.[36] Peter Rose and George Warren were the only colonial members of the Court to speak against the motion. They did present some petitions from other planters in opposition to the proposal. Rose feared that unless some restrictions were introduced in the bill by which the services of apprentices could be secured to the estates to the end of the year a great deal of the yet-to-be-cut crops would be ruined. The objections were to no avail. On 12 July 1838 the colonial section of the Court of Policy voted two in favor, two opposed, and one abstention. The Governor and one other official abstained and the three other official members passed the bill by a vote of five to two.[37]

Henry Light's first act as Governor was to sign this bill. Rather quickly influential members of the planting class, with Peter Rose and John Croal as their unofficial spokesmen, came to view Light as just another Smyth, subservient not to the interests of British Guiana, but to the detested Whig Ministry in London. Personal animosities were to sour relations between Light and some of the leading planters just as they had done for Smyth. To the chagrin of the planters, Light continually insisted that the colony was prosperous while the planters bemoaned that the colony was ruined.[38] While Light supported the demand of the planters for immigration, he was not as enthusiastic as the planters for ensuring the entrance of large numbers of field workers to offset the labor shortage.[39] The controversy between planting class and Governor even involved Light's selection of his colonial

aides-de-camp. The men with whom he surrounded himself were accused of being hostile to the "real" interests of the colony and engaging in profiteering through land speculation. As one witness before the 1849 Select Committee on Ceylon and British Guiana put it: "they [Light's aides-de-camp] were not planters; they were not practical men."[40] This was not exactly true. Two of them, Holmes and Carberry, were planters. George Bagot was the Land Registrar of the colony. Goodman was the son of the Brigadier-General of the militia.[41] While some of them might not have been sympathetic to the claque of planters led by Peter Rose, they hardly could be called "non-practical." The animosity ran deep. As one planter wrote: "Our worthy representative of the Colonial Minister (to call him the King's is rather hyperbolical), cannot conceal the dislike he entertains for the colonial members of our Combined Assembly in general, which he signifies by a peculiar and expressive grunt, when their names are mentioned in his presence."[42]

One of the main problems throughout the 1830's and 1840's in the relations between the Governors and the plantocracy was that the old easy identification and mutuality of interests had ended. Smyth and Light were not planters; they were loyal representatives of a British Government that no longer equated the interests of the planters with the welfare of the British West India Empire. In such a situation, while tact and diplomacy might be useful at times, they could not bridge the chasm that had opened in the relations between the planting class and the Government.

Henry Light quickly became aware of the difficulties, from a purely political perspective, of serving as chief executive of British Guiana. Service in one West Indian colony, Antigua in the case of

Light, was not necessarily adequate preparation for tenure in another. As W. G. Sewell wrote:

> Emancipation was an isolated experiment in each of the different colonies. Precedents and rules of action for one were no precedents and rules of action for another. Here, there were obstacles to overcome and difficulties to surmount which there did not exist or existed only in a mitigated form. Each colony was a field of battle upon which the banners of free labour and slavery were flung to the winds and while in some, where resistance was feeble, all trace of the contest disappeared and prosperity has revived, in others, where resistance was strong and determined, the exhaustion that follows a long war and a long reign of oppression weighs heavily upon a dispirited people.[43]

The Colonial Office was very much aware of this factor and was opposed to granting any more power, than that which they already possessed, to the various colonial legislatures. In 1835 Governor Smyth had written to London suggesting that British Guiana be granted the normal West India constitution and legislature.[44] James Stephen drafted a firm refusal. He argued that it was totally unwise to transfer "to a small colonial society the institutions of a great empire . . . . Such a power [as that of the Assemblies] once gained has, with scarcely an exception, been used to confirm and extend the authority of the successful class and to depress the great mass of the people."[45] The Colonial Office saw the difficulties of the existent Guianese constitution but was unwilling to trade them for a recalcitrant and powerful Legislative Assembly like that in Jamaica. The permanent officials in London were, however, sympathetic to the representations of the Governor and some of the colonists concerning the inequities in the Guianese political structure.[46]

In May 1838 a number of Berbice colonists "of the highest respectability" according to Light, presented the Governor a petition

calling for the reform of the constitution of the colony. They claimed that their interests were not represented in the affairs of British Guiana because of the way in which the College of Kiezers was elected as well as the life tenure of its members. The petitioners proposed that this electoral college be abolished and that the colonial members of the Court of Policy be directly elected on a constituency basis: two from Demerara, two from Berbice, and one from Essequibo. They also favored giving an additional representative to Essequibo to be balanced by an additional official member.[47] Their whole argument centered around the contention that the College of Kiezers discriminated against the interests of Berbice in their nomination of colonial members to the Court of Policy and that because the Kiezers were elected for life it was exceptionally difficult to control their actions.

On 23 May 1838 a public meeting was held in Georgetown, presided over by George Bagot, the High Sheriff, to draw up and send a petition to the Queen seeking alterations in the colony's constitution. It was notable that most of those present were prominent planters and businessmen of English descent and most unhappy about the peculiar workings of the old Dutch system of government. As Bagot stated: "I will grant that the mode of electing the members of the legislature is not in accordance with the institutions of the present parent state, of that free and happy country, from which most of you have come . . . ."[48] John Beete, a prominent planter and financial representative in the Combined Court, moved "That a fair, free, and direct representation in the Legislature is a universally acknowledged privilege of every British subject, and that it is a sacred duty each owes himself, his fellow-subjects, and posterity, to use every legal means to obtain such

fair, free, and direct representation in the legislature of the country in which he resides."[49] This motion was passed by acclamation.

E. J. Troughton, another financial representative, voiced his opposition to the present system: "But I am aware that I may be told that at this particular time, when a great revolution in the formation of our social system is going on, when imprudent men are making grave experiments in matters intimately affecting our internal welfare, I may be told that this is not the time to add to social excitement political agitation, and to increase the troubles to which we may be exposed, by partial efforts at altering our present constitution." He could not subscribe to this notion because the decayed institutions "will fall, unregretted and unnoticed, before the breath of the spirit of the times."[50] Therefore, the College of Kiezers must be abolished.

It was precisely because of the vast social revolution brought on by emancipation, that many of those present saw an urgent need to reform the political structure of the colony. These planters quite clearly wanted to have a much larger say in the directions that their society would be embarking on in the future, to insure the protection of their vested interests. This meant not only the abolition of the College of Kiezers, but certainly included "those privileges of every British subject," i.e., the control over the destiny of his country through a representative legislature. It was precisely this implication which caused the Colonial Office to treat all of these proposals with the utmost circumspection. In this connection, it was exceedingly strange that in the 1838 session of the Court of Policy the official section introduced and supported a motion for the abolition of the College of Kiezers and the colonial members opposed it.

In his despatch to London, Light explained his motivations in this regard: "Hitherto the College of Kiezers, the financial representatives, and the colonial section of the Court of Policy, have been the mere nominees of a few wealthy merchants, and proprietors or attorneys of estates . . . The financial representatives, though assumed as elected by the free votes of the community, yet are virtually the nominees of the same parties [the oligarchy]; the form 'I vote for _____' is written by two or three clerks in the ruling houses, on slips of papers equal to the number of voters, are sent off by the town agents to their dependents in the country for signature, who circulate them at the bidding of their employers; they are returned to the secretary's office, produced in the Court of Policy and counted. I have seen three or four hundred in the same handwriting." The electorate in 1839 consisted of seven hundred and eighty-five.[51]

Light was also disconcerted about the procedures of the Combined Court where he and the official section felt powerless: ". . . the Governor and official members are forced to sit spectators, whilst the business is in the hands of the colonial section and the financial representatives. In consequence of this influence, I have been more than once threatened in the Court of Policy, on some trifling difference of opinion with the colonial section, with refusal of supplies."[52]

Governor Light's plan to reform the system of government was not based on any plan to increase the power of the colonial section but rather to distribute that power more widely and also to reduce its destructive aspects. He was in favor of the direct election of the members of the Court of Policy and hoped that by placing representation into constituencies, the Government might be able to play upon the

increasing hostility of Berbice toward the representatives of Demerara and Essequibo.[53] This was clearly the impetus behind their petition of 1838. The Berbice Gazette echoed this attitude:

> The blind policy of 1831 [Union] was instigated by a spirit of dissension, which has done more injury to the colony than anything else. Our representatives in the Court of Policy have never been of sufficient force to secure us any real benefit, or guard us from certain evil, and we have been impudently told that we have not a fit man among us to represent us properly. We have many. We possess men of talent, wisdom, education and firmness among our higher orders . . . . We want a local government composed of members holding the strongest interest in the county -- the possession of property. The suppression of grievances bitterly felt by ourselves cannot interest strangers who pretend to legislate for us seventy miles off.[54]

The vote on the abolition of the College of Kiezers took place on 7 June 1839. The Court of Policy split evenly between the official and non-official sections and the motion was defeated. John Croal, proprietor of plantations Lima and Haarlem and attorney for plantation Thomas, articulated the opposition of the colonial section. Croal argued on the basis of convenience. Since there had been a proven need for the frequent selection of members of the Court of Policy it was advantageous to have such a body as the College of Kiezers in existence to present quickly nominees for the vacancies. Furthermore: "If the Court of Policy consisted entirely of the chosen representatives of the people, and each district had its representatives, there would be no necessity for a college of electors; but whilst one half of the court sit there by office, it will, in point of fact, be an abridgement of the representation of the inhabitants to abolish the College of Electors."[55] Croal and McTurk did, however, voice support to limiting the term of the electors to two years. It is quite evident that the

colonial section was resisting any attempt which might reduce, in the slightest degree, their power in the Court of Policy. Their opposition to the reform proposals also reflected the fact that they were the representatives of that narrow plantocracy whose power Light hoped to dilute. They were well aware who selected them for their seat in the Court of Policy. Not one of the colonial members of the Court of Policy signed the May 1838 petition following the meeting in Georgetown. In the view of many planters: "This body [College of Kiezers] stands as a shield between popular excitement, however caused, and the colonial constitution. Abolish it, and the multitude of hucksters, small shop-keepers, carters, etc., belonging to the Negro population who are voters, would thrust such men into the legislature as might render its sittings a mockery."[56]

Other members of the planter class favored the reforms in the hope of decreasing the power of the Governor, while Light favored the same set of reforms to increase his power. The proposals were a threat to that group already in power and although they shared the desire of the other planters to reduce the Governor's power, they saw all too well the other side of the coin, those aspects of the proposal which might diminish their own power. As Croal pointed out, the reforms would be fine if the Court of Policy was to be wholly a representative body. He and the other colonial members were not ready to take the chance of an intermediate step, not when the colony was facing such grave social and economic issues.

Officials in London were also very much aware of the implications of these proposals and Light was rebuked for introducing the motion. He was instructed not to do so in the future "because any constitutional

changes which may be necessary should originate with the Sovereign, and not with the local legislature."[57] Furthermore, the existing constitution must remain in force through the duration of the Civil List which was not due to expire until 31 December 1840. It was not so much the reticence of the British Government to entertain changes in the constitution, as it was the whole question of the Civil List which pushed the discussion of reform from center stage and eventually thrust the colony into another major political crisis.

The intense political crisis surrounding the renewal of the Civil List and the passage of an Immigration Ordinance must be viewed in the context of the problems faced by the plantocracy as a result of emancipation. The liberation of the slaves and the termination of that system of forced labor which was the economic, and social backbone of the planter's existence, was reacted to on many fronts. The planter needed labor, cheap labor, to work his cane plantations. Slavery had provided the coercion and bodies necessary to do it, with some degree of profit. In the post 1838 world the planter faced a critical shortage of labor because of a host of economic, climatic and sociological reasons which will be discussed in the next chapter. The planter's investment and life centered in his plantation and it was quite natural for him to use every device, pull every lever, to try to salvage what he could of it. One of these plans was to encourage large-scale immigration into British Guiana in order to supply a more adequate labor force for themselves at a cheap enough price. This desire was met head on by a British Government reluctant to sanction immigration schemes which might appear like the revival of slavery. The plans were opposed by the English anti-slavery forces and important members of the Colonial

Office. Not only would such a scheme be a revival of slavery under a new form but it would also endanger the status of the newly freed Negroes. The issue was joined; both sides had various weapons in their arsenals.

It was clear to all concerned that the Civil List agreed to in 1835 would have to be enlarged by at least a factor or two in 1840. It seems equally clear, in retrospect, that the public revenue was sufficient to support such an increase. The Sovereign's Chest, combined for the duration of the past Civil List with the Colonial Chest, had made up the revenue losses due to the abolition of the head tax on slaves. Governor Light reported that he would request a new Civil List of £36,750 but that because of the substantial increase in custom revenues no new taxes would be needed to raise this sum.[58] In fact, Light was very optimistic about the overall economic picture of British Guiana. The proposed new Civil List would include the salaries of ten Stipendiary Magistrates and an increase of £2,500 in the salary of the Governor -- raising it to £6,000 per annum. In justification of this latter proposal Light complained of the very high cost of living in British Guiana as compared to Antigua where the salary for the Governor was the same.[59]

At a meeting of the Combined Court in March 1839 there was a general discussion about the new Civil List and the need to raise money to support various immigration schemes. It was proposed by some members of the colonial section that a duty on British imports might be used to raise revenue.[60] No final action was taken and the discussions were put off until the 1840 session at the suggestion of Governor Light, who sent the Government Secretary, H. E. F. Young off to London to confer with the Colonial Secretary.[61]

In February 1840 Light received official instructions from Lord Russell, who had succeeded the Marquess of Normanby as Colonial Secretary in September 1839. Russell said that the British Government would approve a moderate duty on British goods and that this, in addition to the other increases in the customs duties, was certainly enough to cover the proposed Civil List. Russell informed Light that in the negotiations concerning the new List London would approve a continuation of the compromise of 1835: "I have to convey to you my authority for submitting it [Civil List] to the Court of Policy, and for stating to that body that should they concur in the propriety of establishing for Her Majesty's life, or for a term of not less than twenty-one years, such a Civil List as you might consider yourself, under the instructions now conveyed to you, authorized to accept, then Her Majesty will be prepared to issue an Order in Council during her life, or for such period as the Civil List arrangement shall continue in effective operation, the function of controlling, subject to the conditions of that arrangement, the general amount of revenue to be raised in the colony, and the appropriation of raising it."[62] Russell added a threat that if the Court of Policy refused this then the British Government would be forced to exercise its paramountcy "with the addition of a measure for lowering the franchise very considerably."[63]

It was somewhat unrealistic of Lord Russell, that given the altered conditions, the planters would accept the same arrangements as they did in 1835. As Light pointed out, there was very little disagreement as to the amount of the Civil List, but the real opposition rested on the duration of that appropriation and the restrictions that the British Goverrment had placed on immigration from India and the coasts of Africa.[64]

The Combined Court took up the question of the Civil List on 24 April 1840 when Mr. Young moved that the Court agree to the List proposed by the Government. At this point, William Arrindell, a colonial member of the Court of Policy, proposed an amendment which accepted the Civil List with the following provisions:

> That, under such rules and regulations for their due care, protection, and comfort, as may be deemed reasonable, all restraints upon the immigration of free labourers into this Colony from all parts of the world, unfettered by indentures, be removed.
>
> That, simultaneously with the allowance by Her Majesty of such Civil List, an order of Her Majesty in Council be published, securing to this Court the free and uncontrolled power of raising such sums as this Court may deem necessary and of appropriating the same to such purpose as this Court may judge requisite for the advantage of the Colony; and also during the continuance of the Civil List and after due provision for same, of pledging the revenues of the Colony for the redemption of, and payment of interest on, any loan which this Court may deem it right to contract for the promotion of immigration or otherwise.[65]

Governor Light, in the ensuing debate, did promise that contingent upon the passing of the Civil List, he would approve the appropriation of public funds for the encouragement of immigration.[66] Arrindell argued that the two, the Civil List and the immigration plans, were united, because the poor financial state of the colony would not allow such large expenditures as the proposed Civil List called for. The economic state of the colony could only be improved, and thus the Civil List guaranteed, by the influx of a large number of laborers.

Mr. Young, the Government Secretary, responded with the official position. First, he disputed that the colony was in such poor financial straits. He then spoke in rather harsh terms:

> Now, sir, with respect to our local legislature, whatever honourable members may think of our ancient constitution, I assert that that constitution dates not from the era of Runnymede, but from the year of Peace 1831; in that year it was that, under letters patent, vitality and permanency was given to our local legislature . . . . Let, however, the civil list expire, and refuse to make provisions for the maintenance of Government, and be assured that not even forty-eight hours will pass over your heads ere, if necessary, an appropriation of these surplus custom duties to the support of the Government will take place.

Young contended that it was inadmissable to make the Civil List dependent upon an immigration ordinance:

> No consideration of gain to their future employers, nor of benefit to the colony at large, nor of increased revenue and commerce to the mother country, can be permitted to prevail against the plea of injury to the emigrants . . . .
>
> Such a proposition [Arrindell's amendment] might indeed be made to the Bey of Algiers, or to any other trafficker in human flesh, but not to a British Minister. To imagine that a British Minister, in exchange for a pecuniary consideration, would divest himself for a stated number of years of the power to interpose for the behalf of suffering humanity; that he would covenant not only to be an unmoved spectator of multitudes of strangers, of fellow mortals, pining away in a British colony in wretched disappointment; but that he would also, under the same pecuniary consideration, permit a further accumulation of misery during a series of years, is an idea so monstrous, that no sooner is it presented to the mind than it is cast from it with indignation and horror. Power to remedy and prevent injurious consequences to the emigrants, however unlikely such evils are to ensue, cannot be bartered away; this is it which precludes immigration from entering as one of the conditions into an irrevocable bargain, and, in the view of the case, the co-existence of the immigration ordinance, with the civil list ordinance, cannot be made a matter of express legislative stipulation . . . .

> Be assured that it is fruitless to attempt to extort by threats of a refusal to pass the civil list, or by the bribery of a large civil list, the advantage which you seek.[67]

Despite Mr. Young's rhetoric, London was not as yet ready to be either as altruistic or as obdurate on the issue. In February 1840, Russell had sent out the draft of a model immigration ordinance which would be acceptable. It did not, because it could not in 1840, approve of immigration from "all parts of the world."[68] Normanby and Russell, Young's protestations to the contrary, linked immigration ordinances with the Civil List question. In disallowing a June 1839 ordinance for that purpose, Normanby stated that he could not countenance the diversion of public funds for immigration purposes "as long as the produce of the public taxes shall be regarded by that court [Combined Court] or the Court of Policy as insufficient to provide for these first exigencies of society."[69] Russell informed Light that it must be up to the Governor to propose annually what amount of the public money should be appropriated for immigration purposes, "always, however, bearing in mind that you are not at liberty to sanction any such appropriation, unless adequate provision shall have been previously made on a civil list for the various departments of the local civil government."[70] London was quite ready to refuse to sanction the spending of public funds for immigration unless an adequate Civil List was passed. It should not at all be unexpected that the Combined Court would seek to reverse the order of priorities.

The Combined Court passed Arrindell's amended motion by a vote of nine to five. Michael McTurk, recently knighted by the Queen, voted with the official section in opposition to the amendment. Messers.

Downie, Troughton, Davison, Butts, Bishop, Back, Crone, Cameron, and Rose supported it. The Governor indicated that under no circumstances would he accept the terms of the resolution and he adjourned the Court until 16 May.[71]

In the interval, Light assembled the Court of Policy and with the aid of McTurk, two ordinances were passed, one for the support of the civil government and the other to apply the surplus duties of the customs to aid the Civil List Establishment.[72] Both ordinances were sent to Lord Russell for his approbation. The Combined Court reconvened on the 16th of May and instead of voting the estimates for 1840,[73] tabled the issue, and began debate on the Berbice acre money.[74] The Combined Court ignored Light's remonstrances to proceed with the estimate and the Governor felt compelled to adjourn the Court indefinitely.[75] The colonial members contended that there had been no absolute refusal to pass the necessary tax ordinances. Technically this was correct, but Light realized that their attitude was clear -- they would only proceed to pass the estimate when their demands were met. The consequences appeared ominous. Legally on 1 July 1840 the clergy, police and public hospitals would not be provided for. The Gazette concluded that the precipitious action of the Combined Court had cut off "the fountain of peace and justice" because the colony would be deprived of religious and moral instruction, their houses might be plundered and themselves murdered without anyone taking account of it.[76]

Sir Michael McTurk organized a petition campaign asking the Queen to make such arrangements as would prevent the occurrence of such a disaster in the future, namely depriving the Combined Court once and for all of its financial powers.[77] This action by McTurk forfeited

whatever support he had among the leading planters of the colony and he was never again returned to the Court of Policy. In his campaign McTurk garnered the support of a large number of the Negroes and also the Roman Catholic clergy; most of the other clergy remained neutral on the issue. The new Civil List would for the first time pay the salaries of the Catholic priests as well as the other members of the clergy. On 10 May the Roman Catholic Vicar of British Guiana had presided over a meeting "to sustain the just views of the local Government on religious freedom and for the purpose of drawing up a petition to the Queen against the injustice of the Financial Representatives withholding the support of the Roman Catholic clergy."[78]

Both Light and the Combined Court remained adamant. July 1st came and all taxation throughout the colony ended. Government employees were the hardest hit. They were forced to exist for a time on credit. All public works projects ceased.[79] The Colony awaited the intervention of the Home Government. On 27 October Governor Light announced to the Court of Policy that Sir Henry MacLeod, Governor of Trinidad, was being sent to British Guiana to act as an arbitrator.[80]

Upon the receipt of the two ordinances passed by the Court of Policy in May, in an attempt to circumvent the Combined Court's refusal to supply the needed funds to run colonial affairs, Russell submitted them to the Law Officers of the Crown for a ruling on their constitutionality.[81] The effectiveness of the first ordinance providing for the Civil List depended upon the validity of the second ordinance which provided for the funds to pay the salaries. The Colonial Secretary was skeptical of their validity and he had decided on pursuing the path of mediation before receiving a reply from the Law Officers. On 30

September he instructed Henry MacLeod to proceed to British Guiana to seek a settlement. The personal animosity between Light and the colonial members of the Combined Court necessitated, in Russell's opinion, a third party.[82] The Colonial Secretary told MacLeod that the Civil List already agreed to by the Combined Court (but which had been amended by Arrindell's motion) was most acceptable. But, "You will also perceive that the conditions which the Combined Court have coupled with their grant of the Civil List are such as it is beyond the power and authority of the Queen's Government to fulfil. It is not in my power to hold the British Parliament and the Government of India to the obligations which the Combined Court of British Guiana wish to impose upon them, either as respects immigration or as respects commercial duties."[83] Russell referred to the impending decision of the Law Officers: "I am disposed to think, however, that their opinion will hardly preclude the necessity of applying to Parliament, if your mission should fail."[84]

This was precisely the conclusion that J. Dodson, the Queen's Advocate, J. Campbell, the Attorney-General, and T. Wilde, the Solicitor-General, came to. The Law Officers concluded that the ordinances were acceptable if the Combined Court approved the second one because it alone had the responsibility of raising the necessary money. They then raised a broader issue:

> But still the question arises, which your Lordship has been pleased to propound to us, whether it is in the power of Her Majesty in Council to raise a revenue in British Guiana, and determine its application?
>
> We are of opinion that such a power cannot be legally and constitutionally exercised by Her Majesty.

(British Guiana does not appear to us to be in the situation of a conquered colony, in which the Crown has supreme legislative authority.) By the capitulation of the 19th September 1803, it was stipulated 'that the laws and usages of the colony should remain in force and be respected; that the mode of taxation then in use should remain in force and be respected; that the mode of taxation then in use should be adhered to; and that no new establishment should be introduced without the consent of the Court of Policy, as the legislature of the Colony.' This capitulation is binding in good faith upon the Crown; and even in strict law we conceive that the sanction of the Crown since the cession of the colony, to the political institutions in existence, has given the same force to these institutions as if they had been established by an express grant from the Crown, like the legislatures in colonies settled by British subjects. The researches which have been made show that the Dutch colonies in Guiana were subject to the supreme authority of the States General, and without this usage it must be understood that British Guiana is now subject to the supreme authority of the British Parliament. But we do not think that the Crown can be considered as now coming in the place of their High Mightinesses, even if they could have imposed taxes and appropriated them in Demerara and Essequibo. Looking to the laws and usages and mode of taxation prevailing in the colony in 1803, and since sanctioned by the Crown, we are clearly of the opinion that no tax can lawfully be imposed there except by the Combined Court . . . . Therefore, however much the members of the Combined Court may misconduct themselves, we apprehend that their power of taxation cannot be considered as transferred to the Crown. The only other question submitted to us by your Lordship is, 'By what other authority, and under what limitations, that power may lawfully be exercised?'

We are of opinion that, if the Combined Court refused to act, there is no mode in which a tax can lawfully be imposed in British Guiana without the interposition of the Imperial Parliament . . . . We are of opinion that, in a case of extremity like that which has arisen, this power may both legally and constitutionally be exercised to raise revenue in British Guiana and to determine its appropriation. The representative members of the Combined Court having broken their contract and abdicated their functions, the safety of the State requires that the supreme power of the mother-country should be called in to supply the deficiency. Under these circumstances

> we conceive that Parliament might, without any just objection, remodel the constitution of the colony, and confer the power of imposing taxes in British Guiana, for the benefit of the inhabitants, upon some new body that might be expected to exercise it with discrimination, loyalty and disinterestedness.[85]

This decision was of some significance in reinforcing Russell's intentions to seek a mediated settlement. Russell wished to avoid the necessity of concerning Parliament in the matter -- yet if MacLeod failed, an Order in Council on the revenue question would be unconstitutional and the only recourse for the Government would be the intervention of Parliament. Just one year before, Lord Melbourne's Government had been forced to resign over its unsuccessful attempt to suspend the constitution of Jamaica. The Jamaica Assembly, dominated by the planting class of that island, demanded control of its own internal affairs. The issue appeared to be a minor one -- controversy over Jamaica's failure to adopt a satisfactory Prison Bill.[86] It became symbolic for the Jamaica Assembly which felt that London had already interfered too much in the affairs of the colony.

The Colonial Office in 1839 was wrestling with the problems of how to deal with the newly emancipated societies. Both Stephen and Taylor favored a firm stand to suppress the planters' attempts to dominate all aspects of colonial society. Taylor favored the implementation of Crown Colony government for all the West Indies: "That assuming the objects of the government to be necessary to the establishment of the liberty and promotion of the industry of the negroes, and that the habits and prejudices, if not the interests, of the planters are strongly opposed to them, then the only method of accomplishing them effectually and completely, and the best method as regards irritation and discontent,

will be by exerting at once and conclusively a power which shall overrule all opposition and set the question at rest."[87] Taylor brilliantly portrayed the contradiction inherent in effecting desired social change given the existing constitution in colonies like Jamaica: "To effect by a force from without the greatest of all social changes -- a change of the most practical and pervasive character, penetrating everywhere, and affecting every man's relations with every other man, and every hour's transactions -- to force this social change, and yet to leave the political framework of this totally different society the same as it was, would seem, even in a mere theoretical view, to be in the nature of a political solecism."[88]

Lord Melbourne accepted Taylor's view, Glenelg only half-heartedly, but the Whig Ministry introduced a bill in Parliament to suspend the Jamaican constitution. The bill was opposed by Robert Peel and the Tories. Ten Radicals defected to the opposition to defeat the motion.[89] The latter were concerned with the "constitutional liberties" of the Jamaica Assembly. Melbourne's Government, due to the "Bedchamber Crisis" and Peel's inability to form a ministry, returned to power. But the policy of coercion was abandoned. The Colonial Office was shut out of the detailed management of the emancipated society in Jamaica, although it still retained the ultimate power of disallowance. The plantocracy embarked on an attempt to rule their staple-producing economy under a system of free labor. This attempt in Jamaica ultimately failed as symbolized in the Negro revolt of 1865. The 1866 Assembly admitted its defeat and resigned its powers to the Crown.[90]

The important point in this episode was that only temporarily, with abolition, did the British Government really take a strong stand in the

West Indies. The attempt to do this again in Jamaica in 1839 proved impossible, mainly because of domestic political considerations. Lord John Russell who had become Colonial Secretary in September 1839 was well aware of the lessons of the Jamaica incident. He did not want to take the British Guiana controversy to a Parliament disposed as it was to support the position of the planters -- thus, the urgency to MacLeod's mission and the readiness of Russell to compromise on a number of points.

In a situation reminiscent of the role of Sir Lionel Smith in 1835, in fact in many ways its duplicate, Henry MacLeod assumed the Governorship of British Guiana on 7 December 1840. He gave a "judicious" and conciliatory address to the Court of Policy and called upon the colonial members of the Court and the financial representatives to confer with him informally on their views as to the nature of the dispute.[91] W. Arrindell, R. G. Butts, W. Davison, E. J. Troughton and W. R. Sandbach, financial representatives, and P. Rose, J. Croal, J. Pearce, and J. Kirkwood, members of the Court of Policy, sent MacLeod a long letter detailing their disagreements with Governor Light.[92] MacLeod responded that he had not been sent to judge the past and encouraged them to enter into negotiations concerning the amount of the Civil List.[93] After some minor disagreements were settled, the Combined Court passed the requisite tax ordinance for 1840 and then passed a Civil List of £39,072 per annum for a period of seven years.[94] It was agreed that the British Government would continue its approval of allowing the Combined Court "full power and authority to discuss in detail, freely and without reserve, the several items of the Annual Estimate of the Colonial Expenditure."[95] This was confimred by an Order in Council of 3 June 1842. The following was the Civil List agreed to:[96]

The Governor	5,000	and house
Chief Justice	2,500	
First Puisne Judge	1,500	
Second Puisne Judge	1,500	
Secretary to the Chief Justice	630	
Government Secretary	1,500	
Assistant Government Secretary	600	
Clerks, stationery, etc.	450	
Attorney-General	1,100	
High Sheriff	1,250	
Clerk to High Sheriff	300	
Sheriff of Berbice	900	
Sheriff of Essequibo	700	
Ten Stipendiary Magistrates (Four of whom must speak 'Hindostanee')	7,000	
Contingencies	2,400	
Solicitor-General	300	
Retiring Allowance or Pensions	2,012	
Ecclesiastical Establishments	9,429	
Total	39,072	

The greatest increases over the 1835 list consisted in the money paid to all the religious establishments in the colony and the £700 salary for each of ten Stipendiary Magistrates, four of whom were required to speak 'Hindostanee.' The total amount and method of allocation were very similar to the April 1840 proposals. Why was there so little difficulty in passing the Civil List in January 1841? Certainly one of the reasons was the change in personalities, the role of Henry MacLeod. Evidence suggests, however, that a real compromise took place. MacLeod, immediately upon the passage of the Civil List, approved the passage of an immigration ordinance which he contended was patterned after Russell's draft proposal of the previous February.[97] The colonial members were quite insistent in their contention that the Civil List was only passed because MacLeod also promised the immigration ordinance.[98] There is no evidence of such an intimate relationship in any legal sense, but it does seem likely that MacLeod informed the colonial members, and quite properly so, that Russell would approve an immigration ordinance

if the Civil List was passed. MacLeod noted that the alterations between the ordinance he approved and Russell's proposal "were not significant" and that: "It was your Lordship's own promised boon to the colony, so soon as they should have agreed to the Civil List question."[99]

The great problem came, however, when the immigration ordinance approved by MacLeod was not fully acceptable to Lord Russell. Russell objected to the "unconstitutional" manner in which the ordinance was passed, by the Combined Court and not the Court of Policy. He was further upset that the amount of money to be appropriated annually was to be determined by the Combined Court and expended through the use of warrants issued by the finance committee of the Court of Policy.[100] Russell's despatch of 15 February 1840 required that the Governor have the discretion as to the amount of money proposed to be spent annually and that warrants for the expenditure be issued solely by him. Russell's objections reached Light in May 1841, after he had re-assumed the functions of chief executive and in the midst of Combined Court considerations of the estimates for 1841.[101] In a despatch to Russell he explained that because of the delicacy of the situation he did not inform the colonial members of the Colonial Secretary's objections to the immigration ordinance until after the estimates were voted in July.[102]

In a minute addressed to the Court of Policy, 8 July 1841, Light enunciated Russell's objections and in the 17 August meeting Light introduced the required amendments.[103] A vitriolic debate ensued and only through the use of the Governor's casting vote was the issue saved for a second reading. The whole colonial section was in an uproar. Peter Rose argued that the unamended Immigration Ordinance was passed on MacLeod's assurance that it would receive Her Majesty's assent:

"The Immigration Bill," Rose remarked, "was passed with the Civil List Bill; the one was the consideration given in part for the other, and the two must stand or fall together."[104] He was opposed to the amendments because they would leave it up to the Governor, and ultimately to London, to propose the money for immigration, and therefore London or the Governor could end the allocation, and thus immigration, at their pleasure. Rose also raised the point that Russell's despatch had reached the colony in May and was not immediately presented to the Combined Court, then in session.[105] Light's secrecy in this regard only increased the suspicions of the colonial members as to the machinations of the Imperial Government. The next meeting of the Court of Policy, at which the third reading of the amendments would have taken place, did not occur as scheduled. The quorum of six members was not available as the colonial members boycotted the proceedings. At the 12 November meeting, the Governor refrained from exercising his double vote, and the amendments were defeated.[106]

In September 1841 the Conservatives came to power in England with Sir Robert Peel as Prime Minister and Lord Stanley as Colonial Secretary. Stanley re-affirmed Russell's objections to the January Immigration Bill.[107] He backed up his demands for the necessary amendments with a strong Order in Council (27 April 1842) which declared that if, within three months, the ordinance was not amended the act would be declared null and void.[108] During this entire correspondence immigration had been taking place under the provisions of the act which had neither been disallowed or approved. Stanley said that the most important change had to be in the first clause of the bill which had given the power to set and raise the sums required for immigration to the Combined

Court. This had to be changed, according to London, to read that the sums be proposed by the Governor and raised by the Combined Court.[109] Prior to the issuance of the Order in Council, Stanley sought the advice of the Law Officers of the Crown to clear up any ambiguities about the rights of the Crown to legislate by order in council in British Guiana.[110] The 1840 opinion had only negated the right of the Crown in Council to legislate on matters of revenue and taxation. In such matters, only an Act of Parliament could suffice. The Law Officers replied to the Colonial Office's inquiry on 23 February 1843:

> We are of opinion that, in those cases in which it is not intended to impose any tax or duty, the legislative power of the Sovereign in Council, which has hitherto been asserted and exercised over British Guiana, may be lawfully exercised by Her Majesty in Council. We do not consider that the Crown has parted with its supreme legislative authority over the Colony, which was vested in it by right of conquest (in matters not fiscal), either by the terms of the capitulation and treaty, or by the sanction which it has given to the legislative acts of the Court of Policy, the Crown having continued at all times to assert and exercise this power in every matter of internal legislature not connected with the raising of taxes within the Colony.[111]

This opinion formed the basis of the constitutional attitude of the British Government toward British Guiana from that point on.

Most of the colonial section, with the exception of Peter Rose, accepted, however reluctantly, the ultimatum. Rose stated that the threatened non-confirmation of the January 1841 Ordinance was "a violation of a solemn pledge, given by an officer, specially delegated by Her Majesty's Government, for the adjustment of important points at issue between the colonists and his Excellency Governor Light. The Ordinance now before the Court not only gives His Excellency the

Governor the sole control of the money voted, but it also gives him the power of judging as to the wants of the colony, without reference to this Court. He may, in fact, of his own will and pleasure put a stop to immigration . . . this is a direct infringement and violation of the rights and privileges of this Court, as guaranteed by the Royal letters patent of his late Majesty." Rose contended that no order in council could change the ancient forms of civil government guaranteed in the 1831 union: "I contend that the Crown has not the power to cancel, recall, or annul rights granted by letters patent to its subjects; that no authority can set aside the rights so granted, save only an Act of the Imperial Parliament."[112]

The question at issue here was extraordinarily complex. Legally and constitutionally the Combined Court only had the power to raise taxes. But this legal authority, in fact, provided a large amount of power over the way the revenue was spent. This practical reality was recognized by the British in the settlements of 1835 and 1841. But while the practical effects might include Combined Court control over the amount of expenditure, the British consistently opposed the institutionalization of this privilege and always tied its recognition of it with the approval of a Civil List. Rose was thus legally incorrect in his analysis, but the practical effects of running the government confirmed his conception of the role of the Combined Court as an "ancient usage" of colony politics.

Rose was the only member of the Court of Policy to vote against the amended ordinance and it was passed on 1 August 1842. By this time, however, further minor adjustments had to be added; the British Government had decided to undertake, itself, the regulation of

emigration practices from the West Coast of Africa. Thus the 1842 Ordinance, with the new requisite amendments, was finally confirmed in December 1843.[113]

The planters consistently insisted on more extensive immigration, supported by a loan guaranteed by the public revenue. This issue was debated in 1842 as part of the overall debate on the voting of the annual estimate. With the final passage of the 1842 Tax Ordinance the Combined Court adopted resolutions stating that British Guiana would be unable to pay these high taxes in the future unless a large-scale immigration scheme was adopted and that unless such relief was forthcoming it would be financially impossible to maintain the Civil List at the 1841 level.[114] Again, the ugly head of the threatened stoppage of supplies seemed to be raised. Stanley responded with firmness:

> The power of stopping the general supplies may render it impossible to carry on business with the Combined Court on the peculiar system of representative legislation which has been temporarily adopted; but if it be so, and the public money and the affairs of the colony cannot be properly administered upon this system, it will be necessary that Her Majesty's Government should consider whether a system cannot be established by which the interests of the colony would be better secured and permanently provided for. There can be no doubt that the possession of so much power as has been temporarily transferred to the Combined Court tends to the usurpation by that body of every other power, and also that the possession of unlimited power by a representative body resting upon so limited a constituency would be pregnant with abuse.[115]

The estimates for 1843 were passed, due in part, no doubt to Stanley's resolute position, but perhaps more importantly, because it was in 1843 that the Government of India agreed to allow laborers to emigrate to British Guiana. Stanley also approved the use of the public revenue to help pay for a twenty year loan to support immigration.[116]

The controversy over the renewal of the Civil List, involving questions of the role and function of the Combined Court, the power of the Governor and of the Colonial Office, as well as the political future of the colony, was defined and circumscribed by the results of the abolition of slavery. The exigencies of a free society required a basic change in the method of administering and implementing fundamental social services of providing security and justice, law and order. Under slavery, the planter functioned as a kind of feudal lord, protecting his charges and dispensing justice and in return demanding unquestioned allegiance. The old order was no more. The new society cried out for a whole host of governmental services, and the colonial and imperial governments were forced to come to terms with the new conditions. It was a particularly difficult task to implement social reforms through the vehicle of political institutions controlled and dominated by a feudal plantocracy whose vested interests were being irrevocably sapped by the new circumstances. This was most evident in British Guiana as the colonial majority on the Combined Court used its power of taxation in an attempt, at times successful, to force the local and the imperial governments to accede to their wishes. They were operating in a new society with new issues, but they were using the old institutions as well as the old constitutional arguments to buttress their position. They were desperate men, certain of a conspiracy against them, determined to use every lever of influence and power they could muster to reverse the seemingly on-rushing tide of ruin. They would refuse to vote the annual estimate. They would not vote a Civil List, or if cajoled into it, would limit its duration. They would demand their rights as British subjects to free

institutions and local autonomy. They would argue that the peculiar institutions of their Dutch heritage -- which could be employed in the battle -- had been solemnly guaranteed by the British Government. They would use economic arguments to support their contention that the colony was in no shape to pay for such a large Civil List; yet, they would turn around and willingly do so if only free and unfettered immigration were allowed.

They felt that abolition had forced them to these ends and the record of the political events of the late 1830's and early 1840's supports this thesis of the interconnection of factors. The unsatisfactory political expediency of trying to mold English ideals and attitudes of government into a Dutch frame was the cause of a good deal of the friction between the planters and the British Government. It was, however, but the veneer, the language, the symbols of a much greater, more significant disaffection. The planters were no longer the 'darlings' of the British Government. That Government no longer automatically equated the welfare of British Guiana, or any other West India colony for that matter, with the welfare of the planting class. A whole new society had been born and the planters might succeed for a time in keeping some of the de jure institutions and de facto practices of the old order, including their political and economic ascendancy, and they did, but it was also increasingly apparent that the society in which they found themselves was less and less their mold of clay to do with as they liked.

The uneasy settlement of the early 1840's was the result of British action as well. It had become increasingly clear from 1823 on that the peculiar constitutional-political system of British Guiana

would only work well when the interests of the ruling oligarchy and those of the British Government, and its official representatives, coincided. As the difficulties grew in intensity, with the amelioration schemes of the 1820's, the 1833 Act of Abolition and Apprenticehip, Stipendiary Magistrates, restrictive immigration, and expensive Civil Lists, the system broke down. Throughout this period the British Government tried to compromise. Lords Goderich, Glenelg, Normanby, Russell and Stanley all rejected Taylor's suggestion that a fresh start was needed, that 'regular' Crown Colony status ought to be imposed on Guiana. The British Government despite occasional threats, never acted decisively against the archaic and ambiguous Guianese constitution; they consistently tried to make it work despite its anomalies. When the perfect opportunity offered itself in 1831, they chose to keep the ancient laws and usages. There were, it seems, several reasons for this attitude. After all, the British Guiana constitution, such as it was, afforded a much greater degree of Crown control than the Jamaican. There was considerable opposition in the Colonial Office to more 'democracy' in British Guiana -- for clearly this would mean more power for the planters to the detriment of the Negroes who no one felt were ready to be enfranchised. Why not move in the other direction, to decrease the power of the planters? In an "era of reform", such a step of reducing the role of the colonists smacked of reaction and authoritarianism, antithetical to the English liberal tradition. Since it was impossible to admit the majority of the population into the affairs of government, the only type of representative government would be that of an élite element in society. And in Guianese society there was only one obvious élite segment -- the plantocracy. The British

were faced with an uncomfortable situation, ideologically and practically. Furthermore, domestic politics had precluded the suspension of the Jamaican constitution and had caused the temporary fall of the Melbourne Government. It would not have been very politically astute to confront Parliament with a similar set of circumstances, one year later, in regard to British Guiana. Lord John Russell realized this and thus tried to make the best of an unfortunate situation.

Chapter IV Notes

1. Lord Aberdeen to Sir Lionel Smith, 1 March 1835, C. O. 29/33. This despatch, several pages in length, gives a detailed history of the constitutional development of British Guiana.

2. James Stephen to the Law Officers of the Crown, 9 September 1840, Parliamentary Papers 1849, Vol. XI, Nos. 297, 573, 591. "Report from the Select Committee of Ceylon and British Guiana", Appendix, p. 212. In this despatch Stephen also outlines salient features of the constitutional-political development of British Guiana.

3. Ibid., p. 213.

4. Minutes of the Proceedings of the Court of Policy: Act of the Court of Policy, 11 June 1796. This is found in Stephen to Law Officers, 9 September 1840, Parliamentary Papers 1849, Vol. XI, Nos. 297, 573, 591, Appendix, p. 213.

5. Stephen to Law Officers, 9 September 1840, op. cit., p. 214.

6. Ibid.

7. "Commission and Instruction under which the government of Demerara devolved on Acting Governor Carmichael" in Parliamentary Papers, 1849, Vol. XI, No. 591, Appendix.

8. Lord Liverpool to Acting Governor Carmichael, 12 February 1812, Parliamentary Papers, 1849, Vol. XI, No. 591, Appendix.

9. Stephen to Law Officers, 9 September 1840, op. cit., pp. 214-5.

10. "Proclamation of Acting Governor Carmichael, 7th September 1812, changing the colonial system of Government" in Parliamentary Papers 1849, Vol. XI, No. 591, Appendix.

11. Stephen to Law Officers, 9 September 1840, op. cit., p. 215.

12. Ibid., p. 216.

13. Ibid.

14. Lord Bathurst to Acting Governor Carmichael, 19 December 1812, in Parliamentary Papers 1849, Vol. XI, No. 591, Appendix.

15. Stephen to Law Officers, 9 September 1840, op. cit., p. 216.

16. Lord Aberdeen to Sir Lionel Smith, 1 March 1835, C. O. 29/33.

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Governor Smyth to Lord Stanley, 22 February 1834, quoted in Aberdeen to Smith, 1 March 1835, C. O. 29/33.

20. Aberdeen to Smith, 1 March 1835, C. O. 29/33.

21. Ibid., Second Despatch of 1 March 1835.

22. Sir Lionel Smith to Lord Glenelg, 7 July 1835, C. O. 111/141.

23. Ibid.

24. Minutes of the Court of Policy, 4 June 1835 enclosed in Smith to Glenelg, 7 July 1835, C. O. 111/14.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid.

27. Clementi, op. cit., p. 107.

28. Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 33.

29. Ibid., p. 35.

30. Ibid., p. 41.

31. Ibid., p. 42.

32. Smyth to Glenelg, 5 February 1838, C. O. 111/157.

33. Smyth to Glenelg, 14 February 1838, C. O. 111/157.

34. Ibid.

35. Major William Orange (temporary administrator of British Guiana inbetween the death of Smyth and the arrival of Bunbury) to Lord Glenelg, 22 June 1838, C. O. 111/157.
See also Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 41.

36. Light to Glenelg, 9 July 1838 and 10 July 1838, C. O. 111/157.

37. Light to Glenelg, 21 July 1838, C. O. 111/157.

38. Testimony of M. J. Higgins before the Select Committee on Ceylon and British Guiana, Parliamentary Papers 1849, Vol. XI, Nos. 297, 573, pp. 119-122.
Also testimony of W. R. Sandbach before the same committee, pp. 97-115.

39. Testimony of Henry Light before the Select Committee on Ceylon and British Guiana, Parliamentary Papers 1849, Vol. XI, Nos. 297, 573, p. 181.

40. Testimony of M. J. Higgins, op. cit., p. 119.

41. Testimony of Henry Light, op. cit., p. 182.

42. Barton Premium, op. cit., p. 81.

43. W. G. Sewell, The Ordeal of Free Labour in the West Indies. (New York, 1861), quoted in Burn, op. cit., p. 362.

44. Smyth to Aberdeen, 18 March 1835, C. O. 111/136.

45. Glenelg to Smyth, 15 June 1835, C. O. 112/18.

46. Ibid.

47. Light to Glenelg, 16 July 1838, C. O. 111/155.

48. Ibid.; see also Clementi, op. cit., p. 137.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Light to the Marquess of Normanby, 13 June 1839, C. O. 111/164.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54. Berbice Gazette, April 1842, quoted in Rodway, Vol. II, op. cit., p. 277.

55. Light to Normanby, 13 June 1839, C. O. 111/164.

56. Premium, op. cit., p. 24.

57. Normanby to Light, 16 August 1839, C. O. 111/165.

58. Light to Normanby, 30 July 1839, C. O. 111/164.

59. Light to Normanby, 31 July 1839, C. O. 111/164.

60. Sir Henry MacLeod to Lord Russell, 11 January 1841, C. O. 111/186.

61. Ibid.

62. Russell to Light 10 February 1840, C. O. 111/170.

63. Ibid.

64. Light to Russell, 16 April 1840, C. O. 111/171.

65. Light to Russell, 29 April 1840, C. O. 111/171.

66. Ibid.

67. Light to Russell, 30 April 1840, C. O. 111/171.

68. Russell to Light, 15 February 1840, C. O. 111/170.

69. Normanby to Light, 15 August 1839, C. O. 111/165.

70. Russell to Light, 15 February 1840, C. O. 111/170.

71. Light to Russell, 29 April 1840, C. O. 111/171.

72. Clementi, op. cit., p. 110.

73. Ibid.

74. The Berbice acre money was a special assessment on Berbice land to help redeem the paper money that had been issued to meet Berbice's chronic debts.

75. Russell to MacLeod 30 September 1840, C. O. 111/186.

76. Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 58.

77. Ibid.

78. Quoted in Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 58.

79. Ibid., p. 59.

80. Ibid.

81. James Stephen to the Law Officers of the Crown, 9 September 1840, in Parliamentary Papers 1849, Vol. XI, "Report from the Select Committee on Ceylon and British Guiana," pp. 209-219.

82. Russell to MacLeod, 30 September 1840, C. O. 111/186.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid.

85. Law Officers of the Crown to Lord Russell, 20 October 1840, in Parliamentary Papers 1849, Vol. XI, No. 591, pp. 220-1.

86. Philip Curtin, op. cit., 102.

87. Taylor, op. cit., p. 205.

88. Ibid., p. 211.

89. Ibid., p. 216; see also Curtin, op. cit., pp. 105-7.

90. Curtin, op. cit., p. 108.

91. MacLeod to Russell, 12 December 1840, C. O. 111/186.

92. MacLeod to Russell, 11 January 1841, C. O. 111/186.

93. Ibid.

94. Ibid.

95. "Order in Council, 3 June 1842" in Parliamentary Papers 1849, Vol. XI, No. 591, Appendix, p. 261.

96. MacLeod to Russell 11 January 1841, C. O. 111/186.

97. Ibid.

98. Light to Russell, 17 August 1841, C. O. 111/179.

99. MacLeod to Russell, 23 January 1841, C. O. 111/186.

100. Russell to Light, 8 April 1841, C. O. 111/178.

101. Light to Russell, 8 July 1841, C. O. 111/179.

102. Ibid.

103. Light to Russell, 19 August 1841, C. O. 111/179.

104. Light to Russell, 19 July 1841, C. O. 111/179.

105. Ibid.

106. Light to Russell, 2 September 1841, C. O. 111/180 and Light to Stanley, 17 November 1841, C. O. 111/181.

107. Stanley to Light, 2 May 1842, C. O. 111/190.

108. Ibid.

109. Ibid.

110. G. W. Hope to the Law Officers of the Crown, 4 November 1841, C. O. 111/188.

111. Law Officers of the Crown to Lord Stanley, 23 February 1842, C. O. 111/188.

112. Light to Stanley, 6 August 1842, C. O. 111/192.

113. Clementi, op. cit., p. 116.

114. Light to Stanley, 6 August 1842, C. O. 111/192.

115. Stanley to Light, 12 October 1842, C. O. 111/193.

116. Clementi, op. cit., p. 119.

Chapter V

The Emergence of a New Order: Guianese Society, 1838-1842

In order to discuss the emergence of the new society, consequent to the abolition of apprenticeship, it will be necessary to retrace, chronologically at least, that period dealt with in the previous chapter. In that chapter the particular angle of vision was constitutional and political developments; here we shall be concerned more with social changes.

The relatively abrupt ending of the apprenticeship system on 1 August 1838 -- the final decision was not made until July -- aggravated the expected difficulties of the newly emancipated society. In May and June, 1838, the interim between Smyth and Light's administrations, the Court of Policy passed Police, Vagrancy, Contract, Poor Law, and Militia Ordinances. They were all designed to meet the exigencies of post-apprenticeship society. As noted above, all these matters could be conveniently ignored by the colonial and imperial governments during slavery. Such concerns were handled directly on the various estates. These new ordinances were decidedly pro-planter in orientation. The Vagrancy Ordinance, for example, abolished the role of the Special Magistrates and replaced them with Justices of the Peace who were to be appointed from among the planter class. The Militia Ordinance forbade former apprentices from serving in the colonial militia and a census was ordered to distinguish between those who were apprentices and those who were not.[1] The Colonial Office was not prepared to deal

with an abbreviated apprenticeship. There had been little long-range planning to meet the requirements of a free society. Up through 1838 that Office had been especially plagued with administering the day to day operations of apprenticeship and responding to attacks on the adequacy of the system.

The Colonial Office was faced, in the summer of 1838, with sixteen West India legislatures passing colonial acts on a variety of subjects pertaining to the newly emancipated society and concurrently submitting them to London for approval. At the suggestion of James Stephen, it was decided to promulgate a number of orders in council on the most essential legislative issues: the prevention of vagrancy, the regulation of contract relations between masters and servants, and a law of marriage. These orders would immediately have the force of law in Crown colonies, like Trinidad, and would be recommended as models for the legislative colonies. It was precisely over a suggested West India Prisons Bill that the Melbourne Ministry locked horns with the Jamaica Assembly. And when the Government failed in its attempts to get Parliament to suspend the Jamaica constitution, the Colonial Office was forced to adopt a more conciliatory policy.

In line with this decision of the Colonial Office, the harsh, planter-oriented ordinances passed by the Court of Policy were disallowed and on 7 September 1838 three Orders in Council, pertaining to vagrancy, contracts, and marriage, were promulgated. In the molding of the legal relationships of the new Guianese society, London, with its suspicion of and antipathy for the planters, took a full share of the responsibility. Vagrancy was defined in a restricted, technical sense to describe persons who were living in a state of "vicious and

unnecessary" idleness, without any means of subsistence and who therefore became burdens to society as paupers, or dangerous to the public peace as delinquents. This order was in marked contrast to the June Vagrancy Ordinance which would have punished fortune tellers, unlicensed peddlars and hucksters as "rogues and vagabonds." The Order in Council dealing with contracts disallowed all contractual agreements for labor made outside of the colony. All contracts were to have a maximum limit of one year. The enforcement of the vagrancy and contract provisions was to be in the hands of Stipendiary Magistrates who were granted the power to interpret the regulations and impose fines and punishment as they saw fit.[2] In referring to these codes, Governor Light remarked: "In the arrangement of the chapters into distinct branches of the subject, in perspicuity of language, in comprehensive brevity of definition and enumeration of offences, they form the most simple, perfect and easily understood manual of legislation on the particular subject to which they relate, that was ever composed for the guidance of masters and servants in this part of the world."[3]

The legislative colonies of the West Indies had considerable power, and success, in opposing London's plans. British Guiana enjoyed none of that political leverage, but the colony was not as powerless as most Crown colonies. While it was required to accept legislation by order in council, the Combined Court served as a vehicle of pressure through revenue matters in an attempt to secure measures the planters considered essential.

With the termination of apprenticeship the Colonial Office was confronted with a significant judicial problem in the West Indies. While it had prepared plans for a permanent judiciary in the British

West Indies, the funds were lacking, and, in the legislative colonies, London lacked the authority to institute its plans. Governor Smyth had informed Lord Glenelg that all fifteen Stipendiary Magistrates would be required after 1 August 1838 in order to insure the efficient and impartial administration of justice.[4] Light concurred in this belief and he permitted the magistrates to operate normally after 1 August, consistently refusing to entertain motions in the Court of Policy to debate alternative judicial systems.[5] The Colonial Office persuaded the Treasury to continue to finance these magistrates until 1 August 1840.[6] As has been noted, despite some opposition, the Civil List negotiated by Henry MacLeod included provisions for their salaries. Unlike British Guiana, most of the legislative colonies integrated the remnants of the Special Magistracy with the old planter justices.[7]

The proprietary body of British Guiana, reluctantly and with great forebodings, witnessed the arrival of 1 August 1838. The celebration in the islands coincided with the end of the crop season, but in Guiana, where the crop was taken year round, there was a grave concern that the harvesting of the canes and the production of sugar would be affected adversely by a shortage of labor.[8] The whole question of the availability of a sufficient amount of labor, to secure the proper production quotas, was one of the central concerns of the planting class in regards to the new society. The imperial orders in council affecting vagrancy and contract regulations were not framed so as to limit strictly the movement of free Negro labor nor to bind effectively the ex-slaves to the estates.

In the October 1838 issue of the Gazette, William Hilhouse, a Demerara planter, gave a pessimistic report of what emancipated society was like. Freedom, he said, had been granted prematurely. Only about one-third of the women and one-half of the men were working regularly. This would, he contended, mean a reduction of about 30,000 hogsheads in the production of sugar. The wages demanded were too high. The vagrancy laws were inadequate. Rent and medicine were free so that they were not valued. With the sea full of fish and the bush of game, there was little incentive to work. Immigration on a large scale was needed just to make ends meet.[9]

The planters universally raised the cry of ruin. They pointed to the tremendous decline in exports of sugar and other staples as evidence of the bad effects of emancipation. The first quarter of 1839 saw a decrease of 4,568 hogsheads of sugar and 1,006 puncheons of rum over the same quart of 1838. This was a decrease of nearly one-third.[10] The planters claimed that the lack of continuous labor had caused this significant decrease in production. Governor Light, commenting on these first statistics of the new social order, disagreed. Light argued that the decrease was due to other factors, peculiar to British Guiana's sugar production. Cane cultivation on most of the estates was four to five miles from sugar mills. The fields were intersected by trenches -- for both drainage and irrigation -- leading to a main trench or canal running the whole length of the estate. These canals served as routes to the mill as the cut cane was placed on punts in the water. In ordinary seasons the trenches were sufficiently supplied, from creeks or lakes, with water, to use these mule drawn punts. The 1839 season, according to Light, had appeared very

favorable at the beginning of the year but for an eighty day period prior to the end of April there was an extensive drought which dried up many lakes, creeks and trenches. The canes, therefore, were left uncut because of the impossibility of conveying them to the mill. There had also been a number of fires in the first quarter of 1839, with more than seventy square miles of Demerara in flames at one time. "This, then, is the chief cause of the failure during the last quarter, and not the idleness of the peasantry, to which some planters are disposed to ascribe it."[11]

The Anti-Slavery Society sanctioned another visit to the colony by John Scoble to investigate the conditions following emancipation. He and two others arrived in British Guiana in December 1838 and remained until June 1839. Scoble's inquiries and the reaction to them by both Governor Light and the planters serve as a useful vehicle to analyze the more immediate effects of emancipation. Light was not at all pleased that Scoble had come so soon. ". . . I should have been better pleased had they remained away for some time longer, and have allowed the two classes, employers and employed, to learn their relative positions without interference from itinerant philanthropists."[12] Light also complained of what he considered Scoble's desire for immediate perfection without reflecting on the obstacles inherent in the circumstances of colonial society. Scoble was very critical of the planting class: "I should say that the conduct generally, on the part of the mangers of estates toward the negroes, has not been conciliatory; on the contrary, they have brought with them into the state of freedom the habits and associations of slavery, and a degree of harshness has characterized their general conduct towards the

negroes, both as to the manner in which they have conducted themselves towards them in the time of work, and also to the manner in which they have acted towards them out of the time of labour; they have treated them with great hauteur and distance, and exhibited much of pride and sometimes of violence toward them."[13] This attitude, according to Scoble, was the main reason why the Negroes did not want to work on the estates. They wished to escape from slavery and all its symbols by becoming free-holders or petty traders.[14] The decrease in the labor force was also due to the withdrawal of women and children from the fields. The Abolition Act of 1833 freed all those under six years old as of 1 August 1834. There was a general reluctance on the part of parents to have their children, who were free, associated in any way with what might be considered slavery. It must always be remembered that a large amount of the legal nuances of slavery and abolition were lost on the Negro. What he associated with slavery was coerced labor on an estate. He could not really be free until he had the opportunity to opt out of this syndrome.

Governor Light, while sympathetic to the Negro cause, was very much afraid of the proclivities of the Black man to be swayed easily by the rhetoric of men like Scoble:

> The labourer, just emerged from certain restrictions, has not yet entirely arranged in his mind a perfect idea of the true meaning of the word liberty; he eagerly listens to those whom he fancies are expressly on the errand, by what authority he has only a vague comprehension, of explaing his rights; he suspects that from these rights he is debarred; he clings with willingness to any doctrine which would make him still more independent of labour; he applies every doubtful term to his own wishes; he construes instantly the words of his known advocate to his own advantage; he believes,

> therefore, he is not in possession of all his rights; he is suspicious of his employer, of the administration of justice; therefore he continues unsettled, discontented, assumes rights which are resisted, and both employer and employed are losers.[15]

One of the thorniest issues to plague relations between employer and laborer, and the Government, was that of the right of the Negroes to occupy the houses and small plots of land which they had on the estate during slavery and apprenticeship. As slaves or apprentices the Negroes received the right to live in huts or small houses on the plantation and maintain their own provision grounds. Now that they were legally free, the whole question of their tenure rights was very confusing. Most employers were more than willing to overlook the legal question of compensation for this tenure if the Negro worked full-time on the estate. But they maintained that by ceasing to work for the estate, the laborer ceased to have the right to house and land since they legally belonged to the proprietor. There was also an in-between situation concerning those laborers who decided to work only a few days a week on the estate, since they were paid by the task. This was especially true with those plantations close to Georgetown where some laborers felt they could live rent free and be employed as a town laborer.

Representative of this problem was Plantation La Penitence owned by John Albouy. This estate was close to Georgetown and Albouy complained of a lack of regular labor because Negroes who lived on his land, in his cottages, worked in Georgetown. They neither paid rent nor worked for him in the field with any degree of regularity. Albouy contended that as of December 1838 he had a payroll of 230 workers, yet only twenty were in the field on any given day. He

therefore instituted a policy that laborers should pay 'rent' for their homes, at a certain rate per day, for every day that the laborer was absent from the fields. He decided to deduct five stivers (two bits)[16] from their pay for every day absent for the first month and ten stivers per day for the second month. Albouy, writing to Governor Light in April 1839, said that for the first quarter of 1839 he had about sixty-nine workers in the field each day.[17] Several laborers challenged Albouy's policy and brought suit against him before the local Stipendiary Magistrate, George Ross. One female laborer, Hannah, claimed that Albouy had illegally deducted two guilders from her pay as rent. Albouy defended his practice as only proper -- that rent should be charged when work was not performed. Ross, however, ordered Albouy to pay Hannah and the other laborers what he had deducted because there were no written contracts allowing such deductions. The magistrate also felt that Albouy was only rationalizing the deduction as rent after the fact of the complaint.[18]

Albouy appealed Ross's decision to Governor Light who upheld the findings of the Stipendiary Magistrate. During the original trial, Donald Gilzean, Albouy's plantation manager, complained that an "evil disposed person," John Scoble, had "tampered with the gang" at La Penitence and was "the cause of the unsettled state."[19] Scoble was involved in the case but it seems that Gilzean and Albouy were only using him as a scapegoat. After the award of the court had been paid, Gilzean dismissed the workers involved in the suit.[20]

While the Governor was considering Albouy's appeal, he received a petition, authored by Scoble and signed by many laborers of La Penitence, urging Light to uphold Ross's decision. The petition

claimed that despite the grant of legal freedom on 1 August 1838:

> Your memoralists, however, found that their personal liberty was restrained, and that the labour market was restricted by the operation of laws passed by the Court of Policy; and that, from the peculiarity of their circumstances, they were compelled to accept the terms of their master, both in the amount of work they were to perform, and the wages they were to receive for the same, or to become houseless wanderers and vagrants, and that thus one of the greatest attributes of freedom was denied them. Instead of confidence there arose suspicion. They found themselves bound by contracts to labour to which they were not parties, and subject to penalties for their non-performance of such contracts, as though they had voluntarily entered into them.[21]

The petition also pointed out that if five stivers a day were charged for rent that would mean one hundred and fifty-six dollars per year, an outrageous charge for such hovels.

Another aspect of this problem was the conversion of work expectations to task work. Under apprenticeship Governor Smyth had appointed a committee of planters to draw up a table of expected labor to be done in seven and a half hours in various jobs. With the adoption of task work, it was very difficult to require the laborer to be in the field a certain number of hours, or days for that matter. All that was technically demanded was the completion of a certain task. The only legal resource which the planter had was eviction. And with the tremendous labor shortage this was not a wise expedient. The planter was in a difficult situation confronted with irregular labor in a market which needed every laborer it could get.

While Governor Light upheld the decision of Ross, he was most distressed at Scoble's interference. The Governor felt that Scoble was continually reminding all in the colony of the by-gone days of slavery:

> I think that were the labourers and employers left to themselves, mistrust would soon pass away; but so long as itinerant vindicators of the rights of negroes continue to go amongst them, recall the past, and pretend to an authority for redress other than by the vigilance of the executive superintending the decisions of the paid magistracy, the suspicions of the negro will be kept alive. He is ignorant of the real calling of the advocate, and concludes there must be something wrong, since it is necessary for persons to traverse the seas to look after governor, magistrates, clergy and employers.[22]

In a final interview with the Governor on 31 May 1839, Scoble contended that the laboring population was "subject to caprice and oppression" by the planters. The laborers were not free to travel at will to work for another employer because of the undue advantage the planter had in the housing situation. Testifying before the 1842 Select Committee on the State of the West Indies, Scoble referred to the whole question of rent and land tenure: "I think that question lies at the very root of the evil under which British Guiana principally suffers at the present time. There has never been a proper understanding between the employer and the employed as to the tenure under which they shall hold possession of their huts and provision grounds. A planter makes labour the tenure by which the labourer shall hold his hut, but the labourer considers himself as a tenant paying rent, in the shape of work, for the hut which he occupies; and this is the question in debate between the planter and the labourer at the present time."[23] Scoble argued that a comprehensive rent system should have been established, but that many planters resisted this because it would decrease their control over the Negroes.[24]

Light agreed that the employers did use the fact of dwelling ownership as a means to insure as steady a labor supply as possible. But

this was natural because proximity to towns tempted the laborers to shirk their field responsibilities on the estates for piece-work jobs in the towns. The Governor was optimistic about the future, feeling that the old barriers will, of necessity, break down: "The old leaven of the planter must wear away sooner in this colony than in many others; managers and overseers must abandon the use of harsh language, imperious commands or unjust demands, otherwise work on the estates will slacken. New wants daily springing up in the labouring population will induce continuous industry; the regularity of that industry being assured, tenancy will not be opposed; but even this will then be scarcely required, as the industrious will be too valuable to be subject to caprice, and the idle would soon find tenancy was as inconvenient as conditional occupancy."[25]

Governor Light, like Smyth before him, was extremely diligent in his responsibilities to secure the rights of the Negroes. He instructed the Stipendiary Magistrates to visit all the estates in their district at least once a month, even if no complaints were received. The magistrates were also required to submit monthly reports to the Governor who forwarded them to the Colonial Office.[26]

The second quarter of 1839, 6 April to 5 July, resulted in a continued decrease in the export of sugar as compared with the previous year. Light continued to remain optimistic about the overall economic picture and blamed the diminished crop on the very long drought which he contended would have lowered production even "under the most coerced system of labour."[27] One of the chief barometers of economic health which the Governor used was the balance in the Colonial Chest which as of 13 July 1839 amounted to nearly £5,000.[28] Lord Normanby, responding

to Light's despatches, in August, stated: "I have had great satisfaction in receiving the conclusive proof which your Despatch affords that the resources of the colony have not only not decayed, but have undergone a decided improvement since the abolition of slavery and the termination of the apprenticeship system."[29]

The issue of the economic state of the colony was hotly debated by the planters and the Governor. Light argued that the decrease in exports was only partially due to the shortage of labor which had been occasioned by the transition from slavery to freedom. The main problem, in Light's eyes, was the prevalence of long and severe droughts in 1839 and 1840. The Governor further pointed out that despite the decrease in production, sugar prices were higher in 1839 than for the past fifteen years and that although their was a decrease in the total amount exported, incomes were still high.[30] In June 1839 Light submitted to the Colonial Office a list of estates sold since 1 August 1838. Every one of them brought at least their full market value.[31] More significantly, the year end reports of the Stipendiary Magistrates documented few complaints throughout the colony.[32] W. B. Wolseley, the Assistant Government Secretary, made a circuit tour of all the districts in Demerara and Essequibo and in his report of 10 November 1839 he spoke of the progressive improvement in the living conditions of the laborers.[33] The Gazette, on reviewing a year of freedom in 1839, while cognizant of the fall in production, felt that the overall economic picture was not nearly as bleak as had been anticipated. It was true that some laborers had become partial vagrants, the journal reported, but the greater number remained steadily at work.[34]

The planters hardly agreed. The export of sugar in 1839 amounted to 35,845 hogsheads as compared to 48,812 in 1838 and 67,494 in 1836. The total value of exports in 1836 amounted to £2,135,379. In 1839 there was a decrease of £1,150,000 from this figure.[35] These statistics were confirmation of the contention of the planters that economic ruin had visited the colony. The reason was obvious to them. The abolition of slavery and the end of apprenticeship had so diminished the number of agricultural workers that vast tracts of fertile land remained uncultivated, many estates had been abandoned altogether, and segments left unattended. "This state of things is not only pregnant with ruin to the landed interests of this colony, but prejudicial to the moral condition of the labourers themselves, as idleness tends to increase, and is almost universally the originator and companion of crime."[36] The West India Merchant's Association of London, in a letter to Lord Russell, rejected the notion that the fall in production was due to bad weather, or the lack of high enough wages, but "entirely owing to a want of continuous and regular labour." Many Negroes, they said, have abandoned the cultivation of the soil for petty trading and other professions.[37]

In an address to the Combined Court in February 1839, Light urged the planters to check the idleness of which they complained, by evicting any laborer who did not work and by refusing to hire such evicted laborers. "I defy the most enthusiastic false or true philanthropist to say that a day's labour, which may be completed in five or six hours, or even less time, is an oppressive demand on the labourer, paid as he is, and favoured as he is, almost universally, with other privileges, which place him far above the condition of the labourer in Europe.

The freedom which leads to the mere supply of the common calls of hunger will never raise the descendant of Africa in the scale of human beings, which the friends of freedom much desire. The idle should return to the lands of their forefathers -- the woods, the deserts -- for which alone they are fit; society does not want them."[38] Governor Light's advice was ill-received. The planters, to a certain extent, encouraged the idleness and slovenly work of which they complained. The great fear of the planters was a labor shortage. They attempted to secure as large a work gang as possible; encouraged slackness and allowed the laborers to work only half a day because the neighboring estates pursued the same policy. The planter felt that in order not to lose his laborers to another estate he had to follow these practices. Immediately following the end of apprenticeship the planters scarcely credited the possibility of being able to retain the laborers "within the bounds of civilisation." They expected nothing less than the wholesale abandonment of industry.[39] They were perplexed and angered by the interference of "self-appointed investigators of the new social system, who came from the mother country, seekers of grievances and criticisms of the conduct of the public officers, from the executive downwards; men who arrogated to themselves the title of peculiar guardians of the rights of the new freemen" and who excited distrust and discord in the minds of the laboring population.[40] Such an attitude only exacerbated the transition problems of labor supply in British Guiana.

In the final analysis, the debate over the economic state of British Guiana was clearly a matter of perspective. The planters cried ruin, and they did suffer materially as the export statistics and plantation

records indicate. The high price of sugar in 1839 and 1840 alleviated to an extent, this economic crisis. Governor Light and the official community at first disputed even this, but as it became more evident, the British argued that while some planters suffered, the overall economic picture was still sound. Amidst an array of statistics and contending factional arguments a general picture of the economic state of the colony in the three or four years following the end of apprenticeship does emerge.

There was no doubt about the significant decline in the production of sugar. The lack of continuous labor was the analysis of the planter to explain this decrease. Laborers were needed on a consistent basis to clean the canals and trenches of debris and weeds. The cane fields themselves had to be weeded on a regular basis. Once the canes had ripened they had to be cut and transported to the mill or else they would rot in the ground and the crop would be lost. One of the most notable changes in the labor picture that resulted from the abolition of slavery was the absence of coercion. It was after all a forced labor system which provided the economic rasion d'etre for plantation sugar in the first place. Slave labor produced considerably more sugar than the same number of workers could produce with the absence of such coercion. The power which came from ownership, the right of private property and the right to force that property to work long and hard hours for the benefit of the estate, was gone. Many Negroes simply chose not to work on estates. This exercise of their freedom, unthinkable in the days of coercion, aggravated the labor problems of the estate owner. But one can hardly condemn a laborer for not desiring to engage in daily toil at the insistence of a plantation manager who was his former master.

Some witnesses before the 1842 Select Committee on the state of the West Indies even disputed the claims that the planters were in a bad economic state in British Guiana. Captain J. A. Allen, a Stipendiary Magistrate, attributed the dimunition in production not to a decrease in the number of laborers but to the fact that their labor could not be compelled or forced as in the times of slavery or apprenticeship. But Allen remarked that while this was true, the income of the planters had not really declined because of the inflated price of sugar.[41]

Mungo Campbell, owner of five estates in British Guiana, presented detailed evidence to this Committee on the state of his plantations. In 1837 he had 1014 acres of sugar cane cut and it yielded 1,656 hogsheads of raw sugar. In 1841, 758 acres of cane were cut and it yielded only 615 hogsheads of raw sugar.[42] Campbell argued that his total area of cultivation was reduced as well as the quality of that cultivation as evidenced by the decrease in the proportionate amount of raw sugar derived per acre of cane cut. Plantation Enterprise in Demerara was representative of what had happened on all five of his estates. For the last years of slavery (1831-1833) the average yearly cost of producing one hundredweight (cwt) of sugar was 3s. 2d. This figure was derived in the following way:

Colonial Expenditures (Salaries of manager, overseer, taxes, plantation stores, etc.)	£ 1,756
Supplies from Great Britain	£ 892
Total cost of crop (not including interest to be paid on the capital investment)	£ 2,659

Deduction of proceeds for the sale of rum and molasses	£1,862
Cost of producing sugar	£ 787

There were 333 hogsheads of sugar produced averaging out to a cost of 3s. 2d. per cwt.[43] The apprenticeship years 1835-1837 saw a slight increase in the cost of production to 5s. 5d. per cwt. of sugar.[44] The cost quintupled in the years 1838-1841. The other cost factors remained relatively constant but the cost of field labor of £2,568 had to be added in. The average output per year of sugar for these three years was 183 hogsheads resulting in an average cost per year of 26s. 9d. per cwt. of sugar.[45] And this was only the average for the period. In 1841 the cost per cwt. of sugar was almost 35s.[46] Campbell attributed this "monumental" rise to the high cost of wages, 1s. 8d. to 2s. per day per task. He further pointed out that although a task was supposed to take seven and a half hours it usually only took the Negroes three to four.[47] Not only were wages too high, but labor was not continuous which affected the quality of the crop, i.e., the amount of raw sugar produced per acre of cane cut.[48]

What no member of the Committee questioned Campbell about was the fact that his cost entries for the period 1831-1837 for labor were zero. While no wages, per se, were paid, it is inconceivable that there was no cost at all for labor. At the very least food, medical and housing provisions cost money. The cost of slave labor was not negligible. Even the cost of the slave was not amortized over the period. It seems all the more strange when Peter Rose, testifying before the same Committee, estimated that the cost of labor during apprenticeship was 2s. 9d. per day.[49] This figure, considerably

lower than Campbell's estimate of the cost of free labor, was not even included as a labor cost by Campbell for the apprenticeship years. The discrepancy in costs, which the planters wished to ascribe to abolition, was clearly not as striking as they contended.

By the end of 1841 the planters considered their economic situation almost hopeless. Increased taxation to pay for the newly adopted immigration schemes affected all levels in the colonial society. On 2 December 1841 a general meeting of planters was held in Georgetown. This meeting was chaired by Sir Michael McTurk, past advocate of liberal measures in the colony. A survey of some sixty estates in Demerara and Essequibo showed that the average production cost of one hogshead of sugar was $99 and on the English market this hogshead brought only $86.40 (£18).[50] There was no prospect of a rise in the price of sugar and it was apparent that sugar cultivation could not be carried on under the present circumstances. The laborers, according to the planters, worked in a slovenly fashion and for this they received high wages plus the luxury of free rent for their houses and provision grounds. Economic disaster had beset them, the fault of the insufficiency and irregularity of labor and the exorbitantly high wages paid for that labor.[51]

The planters believed, along with most educated Englishmen, in the "natural" rate of wages. As enunciated by Ricardo: "The natural price of labour is that price which is necessary to enable labourers, one with another, to subsist and to perpetuate their race, without either increase or decrease."[52] The planters contended that the wages of the Negroes were "unnaturally" high. This was so because the workers, on the advice of the missionaries and the Stipendiary

Magistrates, had combined to raise them. It was also due in part to the "unnatural" fact that the Negroes possessed, de facto, provision grounds which gave them a strong bargaining position. Some planters, in the early stages of emancipation, felt that following the "iron laws" the disequilibrium would disappear as the "unseen hand" of automatic economic adjustment took effect.[53] When this did not occur, the first theoretical reaction was to re-invigorate the pre-emancipation notion that the Negro did not behave like the normal "economic man." The Negro would, according to this theory, only work to achieve subsistence and then stop. He possessed none of the expected desires for luxury items which might induce him to work more.[54] If this was so, then the traditional supply curve for labor would be reversed. The higher the wages, the less labor would be offered.

This analysis was only partially correct. It did show, however, that contemporary wage theory was not readily applicable to British Guiana or any of the other West India colonies. Economic gain meant less to the Negro than to the White, but more importantly, the former slave was drawn away from estate work by factors totally independent of the wages offered.[55] This was extremely difficult for the planter, who was concerned solely with his estate, to realize.

The planters, in all their meetings and petitions, failed to consider other factors that might have produced high costs -- factors for which, they might in part be responsible. They did not consider the organization of the plantation system, the system for attorney-managers, the commission system of selling sugar and the intricate and hobbling web of credit leading back to the British merchants. The plantation system was old,

tradition-ridden, and firmly embedded not only in the habits and attitudes of the planter class, but also in the complex and tenacious network of financial and legal institutions. The economic decline had to be the result, so they thought, of other facts and even the elaborate theoretical analysis of labor, wages and the availability of land did not prove to be an adequate mythos. The laziness of the Negro, his inherent inferiority, the malicious role of the evangelicals, missionaries, Whig Ministers, Governors, and Stipendiary Magistrates, they were the real villains of the planters' ruin.

Throughout this period Governor Light maintained that the colony's prosperity was only marginally affected by the transition to a free society. His optimism, based on the revenue of the Colonial Chest and the sale of estates for their full value, was a bit exaggerated. But more importantly, it suggests a broader view of the economic interests of the colony than that of the planters. Referring to the status of the laboring population in an opening address to the January 1840 session of the Court of Policy, the Governor remarked: "That they are less constant in their industry than when coerced, was to be expected: that they are so industrious, is a subject of gratulation. Their cheerfulness and contentment dissipate the fears of many, and exceed the hopes of all."[56] The peasantry was submissive to the laws and obeyed authority, despite the excitement of agitators. W. B. Wolseley made another circuit of the colony in May and June 1840 to report on the labor situation. He found that recent heavy rains had materially hurt many plantations and that the lack of steady and continuous labor aggravated the situation. Drainage and the growth of grass required steady attention in British Guiana and without it

"the progress of destruction advances with inconceivable rapidity." Even where little or no change took place in the number of resident laborers, the planters found it impossible to maintain their accustomed cultivation. This was due, in Wolseley's opinion, to the absence of coercion as a means to secure the optimum amount of labor from the Negroes. The light work, usually weeding, performed in the past by women and children, was affected by their absence from the field. Most of the children who were removed from the field were sent to newly established schools. Mortality was on the decline. There had been a tremendous increase in recorded births and marriages. There was considerably greater cultivation of provision grounds than under slavery.[57] These were all signs of society's adjustment to the new conditions. While this obviously meant, with a static labor force now free, a decline in the production of sugar, the health, both economic and social, of British Guiana should not be considered coterminous with the amount of sugar exported. It was this factor which the planters failed to realize.

Following the general lines of political economy, Light contended that as a general principle, where industrious habits in a people give rise to wants, if exports keep any degree of equality with imports, a country cannot be retrograding; if it does not retrograde, it cannot remain unimproved in its condition because it cannot be stationery.[58] The exports of British Guiana far exceeded in value the imports for the year 1839-1840.[59] Although the excess between the value of the property exported and that imported may be expended outside the colony, yet so large an expenditure still existed within the colony as fully to bring exports and imports into equality.[60] Based on this analysis,

Light concluded that "wants and industry" prevailed in the colony and they were daily increasing.[61] Regardless of the economic accuracy, from a theoretical point of view, of Light's contentions, they are illustrative of his overall optimism and they do provide a more balanced view of the economic state of British Guiana than that of the planters.

In June 1840 Light also reported that "the flourishing state of the Treasury" would enable public services to be carried on for the rest of the year without the Combined Court voting taxation measures.[62] This was in the midst of the Civil List debate and while the revenue was technically available, the constitutionality of its appropriation by the Governor in the Court of Policy was a matter of some concern in London.

Reviewing seven years of freedom from the vantage point of 1845, Light concluded that except for the condition of the planters, the experiment had been a tremendous success. Wealth had been diffused throughout the community. This was, in the opinion of the Governor, a far healthier state than if the wealth had been confined to a few prosperous planters and proprietors in the full enjoyment of the coercive power they once had over their laborers.[63]

It was clear that London agreed and approved of Light's attitude. Lord John Russell observed that it was not unusual, nor undesirable, for some Negroes to abandon the estates for other professions:

> Carrying into effect the religious and benevolent views of the nation, it was their [the British Government] object to convert slaves into free men; to rescue their brethren of Africa from the lash of compulsory toil, and establish them as Christian men on the soil where they had been transported as chattel, or beasts of burden.

> On this, the principal question of all, there is, I am happy to say, no room for doubt. None of the most inveterate opponents of our recent measures of emancipation allege that the negroes have turned robbers, or plunderers, or blood-thirsty insurgents . . . . They have become shopkeepers, and petty traders, and hucksters, and small freeholders; a blessed change, which Providence has enabled us to accomplish.[64]

Russell continued that it was an important, "but still a secondary question," to consider how to maintain the natural prosperity of British Guiana. The Colonial Secretary doubted, despite the various schemes of the planters, if the cultivation of sugar would ever reach its former extent. For that was what the planters meant by the term "prosperity;" while, on the other hand, the term "ruin" was used to designate, not the poverty of the people, not the lack of food or clothing, not even the absence of riches or luxury, but simply the decrease of sugar cultivation. Russell concluded his lengthy and trenchant despatch of February 1840 with an unequivocal statement of British policy:

> But in whatever degree I might be disposed to yield to the representations of the merchants and proprietors, whether in this country or in the colonies, I must enjoin upon you to bear in mind, that the happiness of the inhabitants of the colony you are appointed to govern is the chief object. Encourage religious instruction, let them partake of the blessings of Christianity, preserve order and internal peace, induce the African race to feel that wherever the British flag flies they have a friend and a protector, check all oppression, and watch over the impartial administration of the law. By such means our colonies in the West Indies will be made to flourish, though in a different form and a different sense from that in which the term has been hitherto used. The Queen, whose commands I now convey to you, looks for Her reward in the faithful attachment of a million of Her people, whom it has been Her care to render worthy of the boon which it was the happiness of Her predecessor to be enabled to grant, by the liberal assistance of His Parliament, and amid the joy of His subjects.[65]

This statement, although ringing with a certain degree of haughtiness and a sense of superiority, nevertheless expresses a nobility of purpose and a breath of vision that encompasses all that was good in British Imperial policy.

Governor Light took continual pleasure in reporting on the changes in society effected by the newly freed Negroes. He wrote to Lord Stanley in November 1841 that whatever the difficulties of the planters, and no matter how much they were to be regretted, by the authorities in Georgetown and London, it was still most salutary to record "that a large and powerful addition is daily made to a new race of active, industrious, and independent freeholders, who must in the course of a very short time assume that middle position in society which till slavery was abolished could not exist in the West Indies."[66] In 1845 Light again wrote of this vast social transformation in the state of the colony: "As it is with the city of Georgetown,[67] so it is in the rural districts throughout the whole province. From east to west, as far as the population extends, up the rivers, in the newly erected villages, in the town of New Amsterdam, in the hamlets on the roads, are rural stores, retail shops, houses of refreshment; from these issue numerous hucksters, additional helps to traffic, by bringing goods to every door."[68] The volume of internal commercial traffic had increased astronomically.

The whole question of the rise of the Negro peasantry has been frequently neglected in the history of British Guiana.[69] Emancipation had an enormous effect in this aspect of the social sphere. The old economic-sociological bonds of plantation slavery had been legally rent asunder. The prerogatives of freedom were being scrupulously

protected by an energetic and dedicated Governor, assisted by a corps of Stipendiary Magistrates. The societal effects of thie revolution in circumstances produced an interesting pattern of freehold tenure in British Guiana.

The growth of Negro village settlements did not begin with emancipation. Runaway slaves, escaping from the plantation system, became the first peasant farmers in British Guiana. In 1811, Charles Edmondson commanded an expedition of the Demerara and Berbice militia against the "Bush Negroes."[70] In 1818 Governor Bentinck of Berbice reported on the existence of encampments of 'Bush' and runaway Negroes on the east coast of Demerara. These runaway slaves were the first rice farmers in the colony.[71] It must be remembered that even on the plantation, despite the other harsh realities of slavery, the Negro was almost a peasant farmer. The slave was allowed to cultivate his own small patch of ground to provide basic foodstuffs. The planter allowed this practice because it reduced the amount of food he had to supply for his slaves. By the 1820's the slave, on the largest and most enlightened estates, was almost like a freeholder. On the large estate of Wolfert Katz in Berbice, the slaves had every fourth Saturday off and with the addition of free time that became available due to the introduction of task work by the owner, the slaves were able to grow yams, cassava, corn, and some even raised turkeys and ducks.[72]

The end of slavery and the termination of apprenticeship facilitated the development of freehold tenure. A French observer, Felix Milliroux, commented in 1843: "Freedom did in three years what slavery had not been able to accomplish in three centuries; it laid in many parts of

this colony the foundations of a large number of villages wholly independent of the old plantations."[73] The availability of large tracts of fertile unpopulated land in British Guiana encouraged this movement. The population density of the colony was not even one person per square mile.[74] Lord John Russell often referred to this movement away from the estates: "It is not to be expected that men who can subsist in comfort without hard labour, will continue to devote themselves to it. The state of planter and slave left the West Indies without a middle class; the more careful and intelligent of the emancipated Negroes become petty traders. A few acres of ground will produce provision for a family, with some surplus to sell at market, and bring home manufactured goods, the Negroes who earn high wages buy or hire plots of land, and refuse to let their daily labour for hire."[75] The British Government in London and Georgetown viewed this development in Guianese society as a healthy and natural social and economic consequence of freedom. Russell called it a "blessed change."

Within one year of the end of apprenticeship, Light reported the erection of almost three hundred free settlers' cottages.[76] In December 1839 he wrote of the purchase of the abandoned five hundred acre plantation Northbrook on the east coast of Demerara by sixty-three "of the lately emancipated class." They paid ten thousand dollars for the estate, saved from their wages, and they asked Light's permission to rename the estate "Victoria" in gratitude for their freedom.[77]

The planters, in their opposition to free labor, had argued that the unfavorable relation between land and labor in British Guiana would mean that emancipation would be followed by a wholesale desertion

of the Negroes into the "boundless forests," there to degenerate to the state of the aboriginal Amerindian indians.[78] This particular fear of the planters proved to be unfounded. There was no significant settlement in the interior. In 1838 Light commented that the poorer fertility of the soil of the interior, the barren sandy savannahs or impassable marshes, discouraged any wide-scale settlement there.[79] An experienced resident planter, Barton Premium supported this view.[80] In the early period of cultivation the Dutch had begun high up the rivers, but the inferior condition of that soil, compared to the rich alluvial deposits of the coastal areas, encouraged them to come closer to the sea. The only profitable trade in the interior appeared to be wood-cutting.[81]

Any desire to procure land deep in the interior was also inhibited by colonial land policy. Influenced by the theories of Edward Gibbon Wakefield, that the easy availability of too much land was detrimental to the economic health of a colony, Lord Glenelg, in 1836, ordered the Governors of the West India colonies not to sell Crown lands to persons without sufficient capital.[82] Governor Light felt that the limited population of Guiana and the poorer quality of the interior lands mitigated against any extensive sale of Crown lands there. These interior lands were sought almost exclusively for the sale of timber for which purpose licenses of occupation for five years were granted.[83] Light saw no reason to discontinue this procedure in 1839, but he did increase the rental fees for the temporary grants as a check on persons wishing to engage in the trade of wood-cutting without sufficient resources.[84] In a December 1838 address to the Court of Policy Light spoke of the lack of labor in the colony and because of the disparity

between land and labor, he promised to ensure the acquisition of land on terms which would prevent labor leaving for the interior. "If persons without capital will consider themselves entitled to demand land, let them not possess it without such restrictions as shall induce them to pause before they quit the more densely populated regions for the interior."[85] The Government limited the sale of Crown lands to blocks of one hundred acres at £1 per acre. The Negroes were effectively closed out of this market, and almost all of their purchases were from individual planters.

While there was little movement to the interior, the growth of Negro freehold tenure was most significant. The new peasantry came to occupy a number of the abandoned estates on the coast. Most of these estates had temporarily flourished in the production of coffee and cotton. They boomed, then slumped and failed completely and were abandoned prior to emancipation. There was a tremendous desire on the part of the former slaves to possess their own land as a very real symbol of their freedom. In January 1840, Wolseley found a place called "Free and Easy" along the west bank of the Demerara River where forty plots of land had been measured out and laborers, who worked on neighboring plantations, were quick to purchase this land. For a distance of twelve miles along the river over one thousand people, formerly attached to estates, were now located on lands of their own.[86]

On the east coast of Demerara one hundred and fifty laborers pooled their resources to pay 50,000 dollars for the plantation "Orange Nassau." Another estate, "Better Verwagting," was purchased by a group of laborers for 20,000 dollars. Light, reporting to

Russell in April 1840, was very encouraged by these facts: "That 10,000, and 20,000, and 50,000 dollars should be paid by labourers desirous of becoming landlords, are signal and incontrovertible proof of the prosperity to which the labourer may attain by industry and frugality in Guiana."[87] Stipendiary Magistrates Strutt and Lyons were instrumental in giving legal advice to the new peasant proprietors. Lyons, at one point, advised a group of laborers on plantation Vigilance not to buy the estate from the owner, a Mr. Davidson, who wanted 85,000 dollars (£18,000). Lyons told the Negroes that the price was exorbitant. Davidson had only paid £2,000 for one half of the estate fifteen months prior to this attempted sale.[88] It is very interesting that Davidson, a large proprietor and member of the Court of Policy who constantly referred to the tremendous economic decline of the colony, should show such a great increase in the value of his estate.

In the first year and a half of freedom there were over 475 land transfers, in Demerara and Essequibo, to laborers.[89] Charles H. Strutt, Stipendiary Magistrate in Berbice, reported that in the same period there were 120 such transfers of land in that county: "Again, I see," remarked Strutt, "that many labourers have purchased lands, built houses, and planted provision grounds, thus rendering themselves independent; these are all circumstances which the philanthropist will rejoice, but the planter must view them with dread and apprehension, for his chances of continuous labour are rendered less certain."[90] Most laborers were satisfied with half an acre of land and this could be purchased for 70 to 100 dollars. This sum could be accumulated by saving six to nine months of wages.[91] Magistrates Strutt, Allen and MacLeod

consistently sent encouraging reports to Georgetown on the growth of freehold tenure. MacLeod reported on the "greatest anxiety" among the emancipated Negroes to become freeholders: "wherever an eligible opportunity of purchasing land offers, it is seized on with avidity."[92]

The proprietary body of the colony obviously decided it was in its own interests, given the great desire of the Negroes for land, to sell plots of land to the new class of freeholders. The planters felt that if they sold segments of their own land to the laborers that would keep them in the locality as a work force. Initially there had been some reticence on the part of the planters to sell the former slaves land, fearing that that would render the laborers too independent.[93] This attitude changed when it became apparent that the Negroes were buying land anyway and moving away from their former estates.

W. B. Wolseley's half-yearly circuit of June 1841 found that the state of the laboring population was prosperous. He estimated that the average monthly wages in the colony for a field worker was 7 dollars, or 28s. Furthermore, almost £22,000 had been paid by former slaves and apprentices for land in British Guiana since 1 August 1838. The agricultural freeholders were conducting themselves well in the new station which their industry had achieved.[94] Wolseley's circuit of Demerara again discovered the same desire of the peasantry to become owners of land. This desire for freehold independence, according to Wolseley, only slightly diminished their work on the plantations because it was in this manner that they obtained money to buy land. Wolseley found that the laborers in the peasant village of "Free and Easy" were "too fond of making money" to remain idle. Most of the men worked on the neighboring estates.[95] The reports of the other

Stipendiary Magistrates during the early 1840's also confirmed Wolseley's analysis that those Black men who became freeholders were the most intelligent and industrious of their class. The men who purchased plantation "Victoria" in 1839 were in 1841 still turning out daily in gangs to work on neighboring plantations, and they did "more work than they ever did in the apprenticeship."[96] Stipendiary Magistrate D. Maclennan found that since the freehold system was only in its infancy, the quantity of labor that was bestowed on the newly acquired plots of land did help to diminish the staple produce of the colony. While Maclennan was generally optimistic about the future, he felt that the transition period would of necessity adversely affect the export of sugar from the colony.[97]

Governor Light made at least two tours of the colony each year and submitted detailed reports on the conditions he found. In Essequibo he noted that prior to 1838 there was not a house standing that was unconnected with the estates. In 1841 small cottages and stores on independent plots of ground had sprung up everywhere. Williams Town was founded in 1838 and by the middle of 1841 the new settlement was thriving. The town contained six or seven stores, an Anglican Church seating four hundred and a school attached. The proprietor of plantation Aberdeen, nearby, had leased lots of one-third of an acre for a period of twenty-one years. Light felt that Williams Town would have been even much larger had the lots been sold and not leased.[98] In 1838 a merchant friend of the Governor's, Edward Carberry, purchased three adjoining abandoned estates on the "Arabian Coast." These estates, once cotton plantations, were mostly impenetrable brush and a fitting lair for jaguars. Carberry subdivided the land into half acre lots,

cleared and drained it, and then sold it to laborers. A number of houses were erected, surrounded by provision grounds. The Governor went to christen the new community Queen's Town.[99]

There was a tremendous increase in schools, especially those founded by missionaries, and this meant at least an initial drain of child labor away from the plantations. Again, Governor Light: "These schools are sowing the seeds of advanced civilization, and I am convinced that in the next generation or two, although the colour will not be removed, yet the organisation of the head will be altered, by the gradual development of new faculties through education now so generally received by the young of both sexes; we shall then hear no more of negro incapacity for higher paths of intellect."[100]

A 'Landowner' writing in 1851 stated that the past thirteen years witnessed the most spectacular and aggressive land settlement movement in the history of the British Caribbean.[101] It was estimated that up to the end of 1848 no less than 446 estates had been acquired on which 10,541 houses were built encompassing a population of 44,443 persons. By 1852 there were an estimated 11,152 villages and hamlets like "Free and Easy," Williams Town and Queens Town.[102]

Population statistics also support the notion of a burgeoning peasantry. In the period 1817 to 1834 there was a decrease of 23,579 in the slave population of British Guiana. This figure included about 2,500 who were manumitted.[103] In 1828 there were 69,368 slaves in Demerara and Essequibo and 20,118 in Berbice. In 1834 the slaves owners in British Guiana were compensated for 69,579 slaves.[104] The difference between this figure and the almost 90,000 of 1828 is not as great as it would appear at first sight. The 1834 compensation figure

did not include 9,893 children under six years of age for whom no compensation was given.[105] The decrease in the population of the colony was reversed with the abolition of slavery. In 1834 the total population of British Guiana was 86,374 and the 1841 census counted 98,113 people.[106] While some of the increase was due to the influx of almost 14,000 foreign laborers, most of whom had returned to their native lands by 1841, the figures still stand out in sharp contrast to the marked decline in Negro population prior to 1834. J. Hadfield, chief census enumerator, reported to Governor Light that in the rural districts in 1841, thirteen per cent of the population was under five years of age: "To what cause this superiority of fecundity of the peasantry may be attributed, I do not feel myself competent to offer an opinion . . ."[107] The population of Georgetown in the period 1834-1841 grew from 12,000 to 20,000.[108] Governor Light estimated that there had been a two and one half per cent increase in the Creole population since the abolition of slavery.[109]

This amazing growth in Negro freehold tenure following emancipation was a major transformation in Guianese society. To document its existence is one thing, to account for it quite another. Much greater in-depth sociological studies must be made to deal adequately with this phenomenon, but some rudimentary conclusions can be reached. The ability of the former slaves to purchase land soon after emancipation suggests that the wages they earned were more than adequate for their subsistence. In fact, it seems that the growth of an independent Negro peasantry was directly related to the acute labor shortage in British Guiana. The planters, desperate for labor, now that slavery and coercion had been abolished, were willing to pay what they considered a high price for labor. However much they may have disliked the notion of selling

sections of their estates to their former slaves, they felt forced to do so. They feared the competition of their fellow planters for labor and the lure of work in Georgetown. The colonial Government, from the Governor to the Stipendiary Magistrates, were vigilant and rigorous in upholding the rights of the newly emancipated class. Legal freedom did bring economic and social mobility of a sort for the Negro. In a market short of labor, situated in a colony where those who controlled the economy were in desperate need of labor, the laborers were able to secure a certain amount of economic and residential independence.

The planters were still reeling from the shocks of emancipation and were only slowly regrouping their forces in an effort to command ascendancy in the newly free society. They would have to learn to operate new mechanisms and institutions to secure again their once easy predominance. It was not until the early 1850's that the sugar plantation owner regained decisively his erstwhile mastery over the "new intermediate class" of land-owning peasantry.[110] But that is another story, the beginnings of which can only be sketched here. The legal institution of complete personal freedom had fostered the abounding energies of a free people. This new class, land hungry for economic as well as psychological reasons, possessed a vitality and determination which had hitherto remained shrouded under the bonds of slavery. The circumstances which led to the growth of such large-scale freehold tenure, an acute labor shortage and a Government antipathetic to the interests of the planters, were slowly to be sapped by the developments, political as well as economic, of the 1840's. The controversy over the Civil List and the pretensions of the Combined Court forced London to adopt a policy of conciliation and compromise which eventually

included the allowance of the planters' main demand, the publicly-financed, large-scale immigration of laborers into the colony. These changed conditions, especially the latter which was in full swing by 1850, altered the economic and political position of the Negro and provided the basis for the re-assertion of planter predominance.

Chapter V Notes

1. Testimony of John Scoble before the "Select Committee on the West Indies," Parliamentary Papers 1842, Vol. XIII, No. 479, pp. 299-300.

2. Circular Despatch of Lord Glenelg to the Governors of the West India Colonies, Enclosing Copies of the 7 September 1838 Orders in Council, 15 September 1838, Parliamentary Papers 1846, Vol. XXVII, No. 169.

3. Mellor, op. cit., pp. 175-176.

4. Smyth to Glenelg, 2 January 1838, C. O. 111/153.

5. Light to Glenelg, 5 September 1838, C. O. 111/155.

6. William A. Green, "The Apprenticeship in British Guiana, 1834-1838," in Caribbean Studies, Vol. 9, No. 2, July 1969, p. 61.

7. Ibid., p. 65.

8. Ibid.

9. Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 50.

10. Light to Normanby, 26 April 1839, C. O. 111/163.

11. Ibid.

12. Light to Normanby, 6 May 1839, C. O. 111/163.

13. Testimony of John Scoble before the "Select Committee on the West Indies," Parliamentary Papers 1842, Vol. XIII, No. 479, pp. 298-299.

14. Ibid., p. 299.

15. Light to Normanby, 6 May 1839, C. O. 111/163.

16. Albouy to Light, 26 April 1839 enclosed in Light to Normanby 6 May 1839, C. O. 111/163; 5 stivers equals 2 bits; 1 bit equals 4½d.; 1 guilder equals 1s. 4½d.; 1 dollar equals 4s. 2d.

17. Light to Normanby, 6 May 1839, C. O. 111/163.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Light to Normanby, 6 May 1839, C. O. 111/163.

21. Ibid.

22. Light to Normanby, 3 June 1839, C. O. 111/164.

23. Testimony of John Scoble before the "Select Committee on the West Indies," Parliamentary Papers 1842, Vol. XIII, No. 479, p. 308.

24. Ibid.

25. Light to Normanby, 3 June 1839, C. O. 111/164.

26. Ibid.

27. Light to Normanby, 16 July 1839, C. O. 111/164.

28. Ibid.

29. Normanby to Light, 31 August 1839, C. O. 111/165.

30. Light to Normanby, 15 October 1839, C. O. 111/166.

31. Light to Normanby, 26 June 1839, C. O. 111/164.

32. Light to Russell, 2 December 1839, C. O. 111/166.

33. Ibid.

34. Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 56.

35. Richard Schomburgk, A Description of British Guiana. (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Company, 1840), p. 65.

36. Light to Russell, 23 December 1839, C. O. 111/166.

37. Russell to Light, 15 February 1840, C. O. 111/170.

38. Light to Stanley, 26 February 1845, in Parliamentary Papers 1845, Vol. XXXI, No. 642.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid.

41. Testimony of Captain J. A. Allen before the "Select Committee on the West Indies," Parliamentary Papers 1842, Vol. XIII, No. 479, pp. 245-272.

42. Testimony of Mungo Campbell before the "Select Committee on the West Indies," Parliamentary Papers 1842, Vol. XIII, No. 479, p. 152.

43. Ibid., pp. 153-5.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Letter of Peter Rose to Governor Light, quoted in the Testimony of John Scoble before the "Select Committee on the West Indies," Parliamentary Papers 1842, Vol. XIII, No. 479, p. 295.

50. Light to Stanley, 4 December 1841, C. O. 111/181.

51. Ibid.

52. David Ricardo, The Principles of Political Economy and Taxation. (London, 1911), p. 52.

53. Curtin, op. cit., p. 142.

54. Light to Stanley, 20 November 1841, C. O. 111/181.

55. Curtin, op. cit., p. 143.

56. Light to Russell, 31 January 1840, C. O. 111/170.

57. Light to Russell, 23 June 1840, C. O. 111/171.

58. Light to Russell, 9 April 1840, C. O. 111/171.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Light to Russell, 6 June 1840, C. O. 111/171.

63. Light to Stanley, 8 April 1845, in Parliamentary Papers 1845, Vol. XXXI, No. 642.

64. Russell to Light, 15 February 1840, C. O. 111/170.

65. Ibid.

66. Light to Stanley, 30 November 1841, C. O. 111/183.

67. Light to Stanley, 8 April 1845, in Parliamentary Papers 1845, Vol. XXXI, No. 642. The population of Georgetown grew from 12,000 to 20,000 in this period.

68. Ibid.

69. Rawle Farley, "The Rise of the Peasantry in British Guiana," Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 2, 1954, which is used by Michael Smith in his study of British Guiana is the only treatment of this subject.

70. Extracts from the Minutes of the Court of Policy of Demerara and Essequibo, 18 January 1811, C. O. 111/78.

71. Bentinck to Bathurst, 23 May 1818 with enclosure of the Minutes of the Court of Policy of Berbice, 6 April 1818, C. O. 111/88.

72. Beard to Bathurst, 16 January 1824, C. O. 111/97.

73. Felix Milliroux, Demerara, the Transition from Slavery to Liberty (translated by Rev. John Robert Sturge McFarlane). (London, 1877), p. 33.

74. Light to Russell, 23 December 1839, C. O. 111/166.

75. Russell to Light, 15 February 1840, C. O. 111/170.

76. Light to Russell, 12 November 1839, C. O. 111/166.

77. Light to Russell, 4 December 1839, C. O. 111/166.

78. Milliroux, op. cit., p. 34.

79. Light to Glenelg, 1 September 1838, C. O. 111/158.

80. Premium, op. cit., p. 64.

81. Ibid.

82. Circular Despatch of Lord Glenelg to the Governors of the West India Colonies, 30 January 1836, in Parliamentary Papers 1846, Vol. XXX, No. 574.

83. Light to Normanby, 29 July 1839, C. O. 111/164.

84. Ibid.

85. Address of Governor Henry Light to the Court of Policy, 12 December 1838. Court of Policy (1838-47) Minutes. West India Committee Library, London. Also quoted in Farley, op. cit., p. 97.

86. Light to Russell, 9 April 1840, C. O. 111/171.

87. Ibid.

88. Light to Russell, 21 August 1840, C. O. 111/172.

89. Light to Russell, 7 January 1841, C. O. 111/177.

90. Light to Russell, 26 January 1841, C. O. 111/177.

91. Ibid.

92. Light to Russell, 21 August 1841, enclosing the half-yearly reports of Charles Strutt, J. Allen, and Ian MacLeod, C. O. 111/183.

93. "A Landowner," British Guiana; Demerara After Fifteen Years of Freedom. (London, 1853), p. 63.

94. Light to Russell, 16 July 1841, C. O. 111/182.

95. Light to Russell, 11 August 1841, C. O. 111/183.

96. Light to Russell, 21 August 1841, C. O. 111/183.

97. Ibid.

98. Light to Russell, 30 September 1841, C. O. 111/183.

99. Light to Russell, 1 October 1841, C. O. 111/183.

100. Light to Russell, 30 September 1841, C. O. 111/183.

101. "A Landowner," op. cit., p. 63.

102. R. M. Martin, The British Colonies, their History, Extent, Condition, and Resources. (London, 1851), Vol. III, p. 175.

103. Light to Stanley, 28 February 1843, in Parliamentary Papers 1845, Vol. XXXI, No. 426.

104. Schomburgk, op. cit., pp. 46-47.

105. Ibid.

106. Light to Stanley, 28 February 1843, in Parliamentary Papers 1845, Vol. XXXI, No. 426.

107. Ibid.

108. Ibid.

109. Ibid.

110. Farley, op. cit., p. 102.

Chapter VI

Immigration: The Panacea?

The planters, facing what they considered to be impending ruin, were busy with several schemes to reverse the decline. All of their attempts must be understood within the context of what they considered the cause of the economic decline to be -- the shortage, irregularity and high cost of labor.

It was fashionable in England to criticize West Indian proprietors for not being alive to the possibilities of mechanized agriculture. In fact, this was one of the criticisms that Ragatz has made of their method of production.[1] Governor Light also criticized the planters for not employing mechanical substitutes for manual labor.[2] It seems that this criticism is more relevant to the island plantocracies than to British Guiana. In Guiana the plough was introduced in an attempt to enlarge cultivation with fewer laborers. Its widespread application was impaired by the prevalence of trenches and drainage canals.[3] Attempts to employ a steam plough also proved futile.[4] Some of the money received in compensation for abolition was invested in machinery. A steam propelled canal excavator was patented in 1836, but its excessive cost and inadequate power ultimately forced its abandonment.[5] The manufacture of raw sugar was uniformly done by steam power.[6] Local conditions, especially the existence of a complex network of irrigation and drainage canals, thwarted attempts to introduce labor-saving machinery.

The planter interest in the Court of Policy during May and June 1838 passed strict laws regulating vagrancy and contracts between masters and servants. The Colonial Office disallowed them that September and issued a number of orders in council in their place. The legal recourse to ensure steady and effective labor was not viewed with much confidence by the planters. With the elimination of coercion such judicial measures seemed a poor substitute. The planters considered most of the Stipendiary Magistrates to be biased in favor of the laboring population.[7] The whole question of rent, land tenure and wages was a new and confusing situation for a class which had recently considered the laborers its property. The rising economic independence of the Negroes, exemplified in their purchase of land, was viewed with foreboding. Closed off from what they considered to be effective legal and economic controls of the laboring population, the planters looked to the immigration of a large number of new, and hopefully more subservient, workers, as their only salvation.

The first place the planters of British Guiana looked to were the West India islands. Antigua had not instituted an apprenticeship system and thus after 1834 laborers from that island were free to emigrate if they chose, and some did come to British Guiana where inducements of higher wages were offered.[8] A few free people of color were also obtained from Barbados, St. Kitts and other islands. The island planters were very much opposed to this drain on their labor supply. Wages in Antigua were only 6d. per day compared to more than a shilling in British Guiana.[9] In August 1836 five schooners put into Georgetown with a total of over two hundred immigrants from the islands. Individual planters had contracted for these ships, but as there were

no laws regulating these matters, some employers could barter with the newly arrived laborers to work for them instead of those who had paid for their transport.[10] In June 1836 the Court of Policy passed an ordinance to regulate immigration by indentured contract. The articled or indentured laborer had the right to appeal for redress of grievances to any sheriff or justice of the peace over questions of mistreatment or non-payment of wages. Seven years was set as the maximum time for any indenture contract.[11] The whole thrust of the act was to circumscribe the rights of the articled servant. The provisions for indenture were to apply for both residents of the colony following the termination of apprenticeship as well as immigrant laborers.

Lord Glenelg responded disapprovingly when the ordinance was sent to London for Royal approbation. The Colonial Office felt that the period of indenture was far too long; it must be reduced to a maximum of three or four years. In regard to external indenture contracts, the period of indenture must not exceed that in which the value of the services performed should repay the costs of the advances made for the voyage. Furthermore, on the repayment of that cost the person should always be free to leave British Guiana. "In the absence of such regulations the older colonies may be deprived of their adult and most valuable male population by exaggerated or false accounts of the prospects awaiting them in Guiana. Hence, as I have ample cause to know, will arise extreme discontents amongst the proprietors in those colonies; and hence also will follow restrictive and vexatious laws, designed to prevent such emigration."[12] Glenelg aruged that it must be the policy of Great Britain to guard the emancipated laborer's

absolute freedom of choice as to where he wishes to reside and earn his living. This did not mean that he should be confined to any one particular colony if he wanted to go elsewhere. But it would be unjust, Glenelg contended, to permit a Negro in the Bahamas or Antigua to whom Guiana was a remote, unknown and almost foreign country, to be tied by an indissoluble contract of service there for a long period of time.[13]

In response to the Colonial Secretary's despatch, Governor Smyth reported that of the 1336 indentures through 1836 only fifteen were for the seven year period. The Governor was willing to suggest a two year limit but felt that it was imperative to have some new regulations on the books since the old Dutch law, then still in effect, gave the masters of indentured laborers the power to inflict corporal punishment in the same manner that a father might chastise his son.[14] An Order in Council of 1 March 1837 was issued to regulate these matters. The 1836 Ordinance was approved with amendments limiting the period of indenture to three years, and one year for those already under the apprenticeship provisions of the Act of Abolition. If the indenture contract was concluded outside of British Guiana it had to be witnessed by at least two justices of the peace or magistrates of that territory. The Ordinance and Order in Council were to be coterminous with the period of apprenticeship.[15]

Mr. J. H. Albouy, owner of several plantations in the colony, objected to the retroactive character of the March 1837 Order in Council. Prior to this date he had indentured a number of Negro, Portuguese and German laborers for periods ranging from four to seven years. Sir George Grey, Parliamentary Under-Secretary, replied to

Albouy's protests that the Order in Council was written precisely in response to the remonstrances of the older British colonies who feared the wholesale abduction of their laboring population by agents from British Guiana who "held out to an ignorant and fickle people allurements and promises of which the fulfilment was extremely improbable."[16] The value of labor in Guiana was high enough that a period of servitude of seven or even four years provided, according to Grey, too great a compensation to the employer for the expenses of introducing laborers from near-by colonies.[17]

The legal question of the validity of indentures of more than three years made prior to 1836 was decided in Albouy's favor, but the benefits of the 1836 Ordinance and the 1837 Order in Council for the laborers were affirmed.[18] It was these provisions, guaranteeing the right to seek redress of grievances before a magistrate, which Albouy objected to: "These clauses I submit, for your Lordship's consideration, place master and apprentices upon an equal footing, and are therefore likely to be productive of ill-will and mischief."[19] The Colonial Office rejected Albouy's arguments, contending that the provisions he opposed were essential to the welfare of the laborers.[20]

The hostility with which the older British West India colonies met Guiana's schemes to seek laborers encouraged the planters of British Guiana to consider alternative areas for immigration -- Europeans (Portuguese and German), Negroes from West Africa, and laborers from British India. Of all the proposals, the latter was eventually to prove the most successful.

The precedent for the emigration of Indians overseas to work on British plantations began in Mauritius. As early as 1830 Indian

laborers were introduced from Madras to Mauritius. The undertaking had not proved successful, due mainly, according to the Governor of Mauritius, to the careless selection of laborers from "the refuse of the population of Madras."[21] With the abolition of slavery in 1834, the incentive to find cheap, tractable labor was rekindled. On 9 September 1834, Hunter, Arbuthnot and Company, plantation owners in Mauritius, signed contracts with thirty-six men of the Dhangur or hill caste in Calcutta to work in Mauritius. The contracts, signed in the presence of the chief magistrate at Calcutta, indentured the men for a period of five years, paying them five rupees per month, guaranteeing round-trip passage, and providing a food and clothing allowance.[22] The reputation of the planters of Mauritius was not very good. Two ordinances of 1835 to regulate the labor of the coolies were disallowed by Lord Glenelg.[23] Persistent reports of disease and high mortality on the plantations of Mauritius induced the Indian Government to send two members of the Bengal Civil Service to inspect the conditions on the estates. The investigators reported that the conditions on the plantations were not very favorable but the worse abuses took place at the port of embarkation where greater supervision was needed.[24] On 1 May 1837 the Legislative Council of India passed an Act establishing Captain F. W. Birch, Superintendent of Police at Calcutta, in charge of superintending emigration through the granting of permits and the inspection of ships.[25] In the four year period 1834-1838, more than 18,000 Indians were indentured to work on estates in Mauritius.[26]

John Gladstone of Liverpool, father of the "People's William," proprietor of a number of estates in Jamaica and British Guiana, wanted

to secure, on the basis of the Mauritius example, Indian coolies for his estates in Demerara. He wrote to John Hobhouse, President of the Board of Control of the East India Company, to explain his plan and seek permission for the undertaking. In his February 1837 letter to Hobhouse, Gladstone referred to the need to ensure regular cultivation of his estates after the end of apprenticeship. Because of the general belief that the Negroes would abandon the estates, he felt it only prudent to begin to take some precautionary steps to secure a reliable supply of labor. Gladstone hoped that by obtaining other classes of laborers between 1837 and 1840, and for a period beyond the then anticipated end of apprenticeship, it might significantly influence the conduct of the apprenticed laborers and induce them to meet more readily the wishes of their employers. Laborers brought in small numbers from Germany, Madiera and Ireland had not been able to adapt successfully to the climatic conditions and work demanded. Gladstone and another Demerara proprietor, John Moss, wanted to send a ship to Calcutta for 150 Hill Coolies under the same general terms that they had emigrated to Mauritius.[27] Hobhouse replied that, given the voluntary nature of the project, he saw no objections to the plan.[28] Gladstone then communicated his plans to the Colonial Office.[29] Sir George Grey sent him copies of the June 1836 Ordinance and the March 1837 Order in Council. Grey stated that as long as Gladstone's project was within the provisions of these acts there would be no objection on the part of Her Majesty's Government. But Grey was quick to add that this acquiesence did not mean that the Government removed themselves from passing any law for the protection of these persons which might appear necessary.[30]

There was, however, one immediate obstacle. The March 1837 Order in Council fixed the maximum period of indenture at three years. Gladstone, pointing to the high cost of transporting and returning the Indians, argued that an exception be made for this case.[31] After receiving these cost estimates, Glenelg agreed to the issuance of a special Order in Council with the proviso that if in the future proof was offered that their value as laborers reduced the necessity of requiring a five year period of indenture, the order would be so modified.[32] Glenelg did promise that the cost of the return voyage would be included in the considerations of any change in the indenture contract: "There seems no reason to believe that any natives of India will ever look to the British Trans-Atlantic colonies as a permanent home, or that they would be reconciled to the abandonment of their native country, except by the hope of returning thither with whatever they may be able to save by labour in a distant land."[33] An Order in Council was issued on 12 July 1837 condoning the five year indenture for the Indian coolies. Both the Orders in Council of March and July 1837 were to terminate on 1 August 1840.

Gladstone and Moss contracted with the Arbuthnot firm in Calcutta to provide 150 coolies, eleven per cent female and eighty-nine per cent male. The ship "Hesperus" was sent in May 1837 from Liverpool to Calcutta. Two-thirds of the laborers were to be indentured to Mr. Gladstone for his estates Vreed-en-Hoop, Success, Wales, and Vreed-en-Stein, and the other one third were to be indentured for John Moss's estate, Anna Regina.[34] At about the same time the ship "Whitby" was chartered by Messers. Davidson, Barkley and Company to secure Indians for their estates in Berbice. Both ships arrived in

British Guiana in early May 1838. Glenelg had instructed Governor Light to provide frequent and detailed information on this experiment with Indian labor.[35]

The laborers on board the "Whitby" were almost exclusively Hindu and 164, or roughly two-thirds went to the Berbice plantation of John Cameron and the other 86 were indentured to Andrew Colville's Demerara plantation "Belevue." Of the 250 who disembarked only four were women.[36] The "Hesperus" landed 147 Indians for the estates of John Gladstone and John Moss. All of these were Muslim and there were only six women.[37]

All of this activity did not go unnoticed in England. There had been very little furor raised in Great Britain over the Mauritius experiments. It was almost as if the greater distance involved in sending coolies to British Guiana evoked in the memories of abolitionists the horrors of the "middle passage." In a speech of 6 March 1838, Lord Brougham attacked the whole system of coolie immigration, including the 12 July 1837 Order in Council, for not providing regulations to secure the comfort of the coolies at sea or the manner of their recruitment. And even more important, he felt the coolies would be unjust competition for the ex-slaves.[38] Slavery had been revived! This was the cry of the abolitionists. Even the Guiana Gazette was appalled with certain aspects of the "Gladstone scheme.":

> We protest against the barbarous and flagitious system of bringing into a strange country hundreds of men without an adequate proportion of women. Our enemies charge us with having, under colour of immigration, effected a renewal of the slave trade, and certainly the case of the "Hesperus" goes far to sustain such a charge. One hundred and fifty-eight men are, by some means or other, induced to expatriate themselves and traverse many thousands of miles, the majority of them in

> total abrogation of all their domestic ties, for it cannot for a moment be supposed that the six women and eleven children belong to more than a twentieth part of the deluded men: we say deluded because it is utterly impossible that, as a fair and impartial representation of their prospects in this country, these men could have been induced to quit their own, unless accompanied by their wives and families, or at any rate by a greater proportion of females. The importers keep out of view entirely, the comfort of the labourers themselves with the disarrangement of social ties, -- they made no provision for it -- no, they contemplated the grinding of sugar out of the bones and sinews of their labourers, so long as they are fit to work, and, as they wear out, to supply their places by fresh importation.[39]

The uproar created by the debate over the "Gladstone coolies" convinced the British Government to have Parliament pass an act for the protection of the natives of India. Concurrently with the debate in London, The Times reported an increased interest in Calcutta as to the state of emigrated Indians. Thomas Boaz, a clergyman in Calcutta wrote a letter of protest to The Times about the abuses in the export of the coolies from Calcutta.[40] A May 25th meeting at Exeter Hall was convened to call attention to the matter and plan strategy.[41] On 11 July 1838 the Legislative Council of India announced the suspension of further permits to indenture coolies to the West Indies and Mauritius pending action by the Imperial Parliament. The Times, on 12 July, printed a copy of a circular sent to the West Indies by a Calcutta firm quoting the price of £21 per head for coolies delivered to the West Indies. The Times branded this a "novel abomination," nothing less than a new slave trade.[42] It is of some importance to note the coincidence of this debate with the recent flurry of anti-apprenticeship activity in England which had proven so successful. The forces were marshalled to do battle; no disguised form of slavery would be allowed to be

introduced in the West Indies; the victory just won would not be jeopardized. The Court of Directors of the East India Company debated the issue in July and came to the conclusion that since the natives of India were British subjects they had the unequivocal legal right to emigrate if they so chose. The traffic could be regulated but not eliminated.[43] This notion received wide acceptance in Government circles, yet at the same time the Government was convinced that these "harmless and helpless pagans" had not been provided adequate legal protection.

After the suspension of the permits for emigration, the Government of India set up a committee to investigate the whole issue. In the meantime the British Government issued two Orders in Council on 30 July 1838. The first revoked all the provisions of the British Guiana Ordinance of 1836 and the Orders in Council of March and July 1837. The second Order in Council provided that in Trinidad, British Guiana, St. Lucia, Mauritius and the Cape of Good Hope contracts for agricultural laborers could only be made "within the limits and upon the land of the colony within which such service or labour is to be performed."[44] This order effectively ended, for a time, all the hopes of the planters for the substantial increase in the British Guiana labor supply through indentured immigration.

Governor Light had been sympathetic to such immigration experiments. In August 1838 he addressed a letter to the Governor of the Bahamas pointing out the advantages for laborers coming to British Guiana.[45] He also suggested to Lord Glenelg that it might be possible to entice American Negroes to Guiana, especially those from the north-eastern states "where they now exist in a despised and degraded condtion."[46]

Both these proposals were undertaken prior to the receipt of the Order in Council of 30 July 1838, but they are illustrative of Light's concern to foster immigration. Faced with the prohibition of overseas indentured labor, Light forwarded another immigration scheme to London in October. British Guiana would advertise free passage for any laborer who wanted to come to work in the colony. Agents would represent the colony at various ports throughout the West Indies. An "Emigration Agency Office" was established in Georgetown with W. B. Wolseley as chief agent. The laborers upon arrival would be free to contract their services to whoever they wished.[47] Lord Glenelg found no major objections to his proposal except for the provision of paying for the various agents by the number of immigrants they obtained. The main principle, according to Glenelg, which always must be adhered to, was that there should be no fraud or deception in the obtaining of the laborers; that the laborers were not only willing to emigrate, but fully apprized of all the facts and circumstances connected with that emigration. Glenelg also cautioned Light to make certain that regulations regarding food, water and medical attention on board ship were strictly enforced. There was to be no immigration from either West Africa or India.[48] This effectively limited the market to the West India islands where the local authorities were not very likely to receive labor procurers from British Guiana with cordiality.

While the debate over the emigration of Indians proceeded in Parliament, a great inquiry into their state in British Guiana was undertaken by Governor Light, at the request of Lord Glenelg. The Colonial Secretary instructed Light to submit frequent reports on the state of all imported laborers in the colony "as may enable me

satisfactorily to meet any inquiries which may be made about them in Parliament."[49] Attacks on the conditions of the coolies came principally from the Anti-Slavery Society, but other forces joined the issue. At the Fall 1838 quarterly meeting of the General Court of Proprietors of East India stock, Sir Charles Forbes charged that between forty and fifty coolies had died in Demerara since their arrival. In November 1838 Light reported that such contentions were ridiculous, only five had died since their introduction in the colony.[50] The Stipendiary Magistrates were instructed to include detailed accounts of the condition of the coolies in their monthly reports. Light submitted a comprehensive chart listing all the immigrants and their place of origin from 1834 to 1838.[51] The coolies were confined to five districts supervised by Stipendiary Magistrates Delafons, Mure, Maclennan, MacLeod, and G. Rose. T. Delafons was in charge of District E containing Gladstone's Vreed-en-Hoop; D. Maclennan was in charge of District D containing Gladstone's Vreed-en-Stein and Andrew Colville's Bellevue; J. Mure was in charge of District H containing Henry Moss's Anna Regina; G. Rose was in charge of District I containing Davidson and Barkely's Waterloo; and J. MacLeod was in charge of District K in Berbice containing plantation Highbury.[52]

With reports in from all these Stipendiary Magistrates, Light reported favorably on the general condition of the 'Hill Coolies' in January 1839. They were paid considerably less than the Negro laborer, but were better lodged, paid and fed than they had been in Bengal.[53] In London the British Emancipator ran a story by John Scoble attacking the horrible conditions, which had been reported to him,

of the coolies on plantation Bellevue.[54] In April 1838 he had denounced this "dark scheme" set on foot in British Guiana to reduce the value of labor and demoralize the Negroes.[55] It was to investigate the conditions of both the Negroes and the coolies that Scoble, Ainstie and Rev. Stuart arrived in British Guiana in February 1839. Light referred to them as "these itinerant vindicators of the rights of Negroes."[56]

In response to the charges published in the British Emancipator, the Governor appointed W. B. Wolseley and a Stipendiary Magistrate of a district not containing any coolies, T. Coleman, to investigate conditions at Bellevue. Wolseley and Coleman submitted their report on 11 March 1839. The sixty-six coolies were housed in two floors of one large barracks like building one hundred by twenty-four feet. They slept in two large rooms. The two women slept with their husbands, "they do not seem to be sensible of the indency of sleeping with their husbands in a public room." The most revealing scene for Wolseley and Coleman was the estate hospital: "Our next visit was to the hospital, and never did I behold a more sickening or melancholy spectacle than that which was presented to us in this building; here we found 34 miserable looking objects, most of them in the act of bathing their feet, some writhing under sores of the most frightful description, others suffering from fever and bowel complaint, and to aggravate the mournful scene, one corpse on the floor (covered with a shroud), to which before we left the estate another was added."[57]

John Russell, the manager of plantation Bellevue, related that in August 1838 a group of twenty-two coolies took a small boat, desiring to sail to Calcutta, complaining that the Indian interpreter, a Mr. Young, had flogged them. The school teacher on the estate told

Wolseley and Coleman that he had seen the interpreter use a whip on the coolies. He also stated that one of the reasons for the filthy conditions in the hospital was the fact that Catherine, the nurse, was "addicted to rum." Russell promised to dismiss this interpreter, but this would prove a hardship because there were not many people in the colony who could speak Bengali.[58]

Reverend Stuart visited plantations Highbury and Anna Regina and found the conditions of the coolies most acceptable.[59] There were reports of mistreatment of coolies on Gladstone's Vreed-en-Hoop and again Light appointed three commissioners of inquiry, Wolseley and two Stipendiary Magistrates, J. Mure and J. Allen. An investigation determined that eight coolies had been flogged by the interpreter, a Mr. Jacobs, but with the approval of George Sanderson, the manager of the estate.[60] On the receipt of this information, H. E. F. Young, the Government Secretary, wrote to James Stuart, Gladstone's attorney for Vreed-en-Hoop, demanding that Sanderson and Jacobs be fired. Stuart replied that the men had contracts and could not be dismissed. They were, however, brought before a Stipendiary Magistrate, tried and fined.[61] The Court of Policy called upon Light to appoint still another Commission of Inquiry to investigate the alleged abuses. It was clear that both the Governor and the colonial members were most anxious to dispel rumors of widespread mistreatment and exhibit their vigilant concern for the welfare of the coolies. It was, after all, upon such laborers that the future prosperity of the colony was deemed to be dependent.

The monthly reports, in amazing detail, illustrated that with some notable exceptions, especially on Bellevue and Vreed-en-Hoop, the

condition of the coolies was good. On Anna Regina, of the forty-six who were indentured in May 1838 only one had died in the period of one year. While at Vreed-en-Hoop, eight of sixty-five had died and as of the end of May 1839 sixteen were in the hospital. At Bellevue, sixteen of an original seventy-nine had died and thirty-one were in the hospital.[62] One of the most serious afflictions which beset a number of the Indian immigrants was a sore on their feet caused by an insect. This 'disease' was not so much caused by the climate as by the failure on the part of the coolies to regularly wash their feet.[63] Concerning their "moral state," Wolseley regretted their lack of conversion to Christianity: "Unfortunately, the bright beams of Christianity have not shone among them, and it is much to be lamented that they are left so entirely destitute of religious instruction as scarcely to be raised above the beasts of the field: this may be harsh language, yet what but religion raises men above the level of brute creation?"[64] Whenever abuses were found Light recommended the immediate dismissal of those involved. He was convinced, however, that with proper regulations and superintendence Indian laborers could be safely and profitably employed in British Guiana.[65]

The official Commission of Inquiry, comprising Michael McTurk, Charles Robinson and C. R. Whinfield ("who speaks Hindostanee"), Sheriff of Berbice, reported on 15 June 1839. The general tenor of this report was favorable to the planters, but it did admit that there were some cases of mistreatment of coolies. The commissioners of inquiry concluded that most of the illegal punishments inflicted on some of the coolies were done by the "sirdars" or Indian interpreters who were not aware of the regulations prohibiting such harsh treatment

in British Guiana. This did not, however, excuse the managers for not correcting the abuses. In the final analysis, they felt that the experiment had been a success.[66]

The condition of the "Demerara coolies" was the subject of heated debates in Parliament. The Government admitted the existence of some abuses, but submitted Light's reports to support their contention that such ill-treatment was the exception rather than the rule. Investigations at Vreed-en-Stein did not bear out Scoble's recent charges of maltreatment there.[67] Charles R. Whinfield, Sheriff of Berbice, who had spent eight years in India, pointed out that it was really a misnomer to call these people "Hill Coolies." None of them were from the hills surrounding Calcutta as G. Arbuthnot and Company had contended. Instead they came from such places as Agra, Allahabad, Benares, Dacca, Delhi, Juggernanth, Lucknow, Nagpur, and Patna. They came from very low castes and Whinfield felt they were much better off in British Guiana: "No person acquainted with their actual state in India could be otherwise than gratified to witness their altered and much ameliorated conditions in this country."[68] The fact that a considerable number of this first group, and a sizable majority of those who came after 1844, chose to remain in British Guiana is further testimony to his contention.

In March 1841 John Gladstone sold his estates in Demerara -- they were proving most embarrassing for the political career of his son. This raised the issue of the status of the indentured Indians. Again the Government was quick to perceive its role and intervened on their behalf. Gladstone had initially wanted to include the Indian coolies in the sale of the estates for an extra £4000. Light prohibited such a transaction. The Governor informed the coolies that the sale of

Vreed-en-Hoop meant their indenture had ended and they were free to return to India at Gladstone's expense if they so desired. All but one opted to remain in the colony until the full expiration of their indentures; they wanted "to make more money" before returning to India.[69]

Most of the colonial officials admitted that a major mistake had been committed in not including enough women with the coolies. Most of the Indian men were noticeably abandoning caste feelings and some were taking Negro mistresses.[70] This first group of Indians was not selected very well for British Guiana. Many of the difficulties of distance, prolonged separation from family, language barriers, and labor expectations, were not clearly thought out in advance. The planters were anxious to secure a docile, tractable labor supply as rapidly as possible. This factor accounted for a good deal of the imperfections of this initial experiment with Indian labor. Governor Light told the Marquess of Normanby that the anxiety of the planters about the future and the need for immigration would make almost any regulations the British Government decided to impose for the protection of the emigrants, acceptable to the colonists.[71]

With imperial policy ending overseas indentures, the planters decided to extend their 1838 plans to encourage voluntary immigration to British Guiana. The colonial members of the Court of Policy, led by Peter Rose, proposed in June 1839 an ordinance to raise 400,000 dollars by a loan guaranteed through bonds issued by the Combined Court. This Immigration Fund would pay the salaries of agents of the colony as well as the cost of passage to British Guiana. Rose argued that the loan arrangement was necessary because the colony could not afford to raise

a sufficient sum by taxation to bring immigrants in large enough numbers to make their introduction generally beneficial. The loan was to be redeemed over the next forty years.[72] While Governor Light was favorable to immigration, he opposed this aspect of the 1839 proposals. The official section was joined in its opposition by Michael McTurk who contended that the raising of such a sum in the manner proposed was "unnecessary, inexpedient, unwise and unconstitutional." He felt it was illegal for the Court of Policy to bind future Combined Courts to such a debt reduction.[73] Governor Light reiterated these objections and argued that the cost of immigration ought to be borne out of the annual estimate.[74] The Governor, in the midst of a debate over the voting of the Civil List and taxes for the annual estimate, was certainly aware of the political-economic value of combining immigration with the voting of the annual estimate. If the estimate was ever defeated immigration would end. Such an arrangement would greatly reduce the potential power of the Combined Court because they would be very reluctant to vote an end to immigration. Rose's motion was defeated, but the Immigration Ordinance, calling for the appointment of agents throughout the West Indies, Africa and Calcutta, was passed and sent to London for approval. While there were some differences about the method of financing immigration, the colonial members and the Governor were agreed on its need.

The Colonial Office disallowed the entire ordinance. Normanby agreed that the idea of augmenting the laboring population of British Guiana was in the interests of the colony, but he was not sure of the wisdom of using public revenue to aid the planters. Public money was to be earmarked to pay the various immigration agents as well as the

cost of transportation: "If the capitalists are anxious to enlarge their agricultural and manufacturing operations, it seems reasonable that the expense should be borne by themselves, and that funds to which every member of society is a contributor should not, for this purpose, be diverted from their more legitimate destination."[75] And it was obvious what this "more legitimate destination" was -- those services and operations of government which had become of necessity more extensive and expensive since abolition. It was precisely at this time that the Combined Court was complaining that there were insufficient funds to provide for such a large Civil List and annual estimate as the Government had proposed. These were, in Normanby's words, "the first exigencies" of society. The Colonial Secretary also voiced his objection to the origination of money bills, like the loan ordinance, in the Court of Policy (or the Combined Court, for that matter) without the prior consent of the Governor. Light was instructed to oppose this practice in the future because it was deemed incompatible with fiscal responsibility and destructive of the executive's prerogatives in these matters.[76] A change in the Melbourne Ministry brought Lord John Russell to the Colonial Office and in September 1839 he communicated to Light his reaffirmation of Normanby's disallowance of the July Immigration Ordinance. Russell also disallowed another July act of the Court of Policy which would have paid an agent to supervise immigration from neighboring islands.[77] The Government of Barbados acted in a very hostile manner to the opening of an emigration office by Thomas Davy in Bridgetown. This unfriendly reaction, coupled with Russell's disallowance of the ordinance, forced Davy to return to Guiana.[78]

Governor Light was disappointed that London had disallowed these ordinances and he was keenly aware of the reaction of the colonists. "Under the circumstances of the disallowance of this ordinance, I must press upon your Lordship's attention the prudence of being prepared against the rejection of any civil list, after the expiration of that at present in force."[79] About eight hundred prominent planters, merchants and members of the clergy of the colony sent a petition to the Queen in December 1839 complaining of the ruin that had beset British Guiana because of emancipation and the consequent shortage of labor. The poor economic conditions of the colony, the petitioners claimed, had not only affected the landed interest, but the decline was prejudicial to the moral condition of the laborers, "as idleness tends to increase, and is almost universally the originator and companion of crime." Immigration was the only answer to save the capital of the Queen's subjects and prevent the moral decay of the Negroes. The memorialists called upon Her Majesty's Government to reconsider the disallowance of the Immigration Ordinance:

> Your petitioners therefore approach Your Majesty's throne and supplicate Your Majesty's gracious assistance. The importance, and even the existence of British Guiana as a productive colony, depend on Your Majesty. Without the speedy supply of labour, which can only be procured by means of such funds as they now propose to raise, the capital sunk in buildings, machinery, etc. will be thrown away; and the labouring population, for whose moral advancement such sacrifices have been made by Great Britain and this colony, will speedily degenerate into a state of barbarism.[80]

The West India Association of London and Liverpool also petitioned Russell to allow emigration from all parts of the world, including India, to rescue the economy of British Guiana.[81] These petitions expressed considerably more pessimism than Governor Light who

supported their objectives. While the Governor favored immigration, he was always quick to defend the overall economic health of the colony and thus his appeals lacked the sense of urgency of those of the planters.

Russell replied to Light's requests for approval of immigration, that all of the difficulties inherent in any scheme of transporting Indians to the West Indies -- the ignorance of the people involved, the abuses of crowded ships and unwholesome food, the unavoidable length of the voyage, the change of climate, the danger of compulsion which would smack of slavery in a new form, and the opposition on these grounds in Parliament -- had forced the British Government to suspend the project until adequate safeguards were devised.[82] The Governor-General of India, weighing all of the difficulties in the case, came to the same conclusion.[83] Russell told Light that he was personally opposed to adopting any new measures for the introduction of coolies in British Guiana because of the "failure of the former experiment."[84] He felt that it might be better to encourage the cultivation of sugar in Bengal. The West Indian planters, according to Lord John Russell, were going to have to accept the changed nature of their new society. The peculiar interests of the planters were now only of secondary importance to Her Majesty's Government.[85] Having stated all these reservations, Russell informed Governor Light that he was not indisposed to allow the attempt to be made to recruit extensively the population of British Guiana. The principle of the freedom of labor must always be a watchword in British policy, but there were certain restrictions necessary to protect the rights of the laborers.[86]

In another despatch of February 1840, Russell communicated the modifications he thought necessary in the June 1839 Immigration

Ordinance before he could approve it. Contrary to the opinion of the Marquess of Normanby, Russell stated that he would agree to the use of public revenue for the purpose of immigration with several important provisos. It must be left to Light's discretion to propose annually what amount of the public money should be appropriated for immigration. The Governor "was not at liberty to sanction any such appropriation, unless adequate provision shall have been previously made on a civil list for the various departments of the local civil government."[87] Normanby had resolutely objected to the use of any public funds for the benefit of the planter class. The key here, it seems, is that Russell and the British Government, chastened by the recent experience with the attempted suspension of the Jamaican constitution, had been forced to follow a more conciliatory policy in the West Indies. They wanted an adequate Civil List but did not want to have to go to Parliament to supercede the Combined Court and provide for it. Thus the device of a quid pro quo -- you give us the Civil List and we will grant the use of public money for immigration. This was just another example of the inter-relatedness of the political and labor-economic crises that beset Guianese society in the immediate post emancipation years. There were, however, two restrictions in the modifications which Russell proposed for a new immigration ordinance. While British Guiana could establish Emigration Agencies in the ports of the world, they were to be excluded from the territories under the charter of the East India Company. Agents of British Guiana could only be assigned to African ports with the specific approbation of the Colonial Office. Bounties for these agents, another item which Normanby had objected to, were allowable, but more stringent regulations regarding ship-

board conditions had to be enacted, for example, only three persons per every five tons of ship and a minimum of five and a half feet was to be maintained between decks.[88]

Amidst the debate over the Civil List and the annual estimate in May and June 1840, Light reported to London the establishment of a Voluntary Subscription Immigration Society to encourage and pay for immigration into British Guiana. Peter Rose, John Croal, John Troughton, and William Arrindell, all colonial members of the Combined Court, were listed as the directors of this new society.[89] At the time of its foundation the Combined Court had not as yet voted any taxes for 1840. It was Light's contention that the Combined Court, being unable to carry on immigration on its own terms, had thus, by refusing to vote the estimate, enabled the planters to be relieved of taxes for the year. Light also feared that when the Combined Court finally did approve the estimate they would vote compensation to the planters who had participated in the voluntary immigration scheme.[90] There was no way for the Governor to prevent this possibility, if it arose, accept by suspending the Combined Court. This alternative would not prove very palatable, since only the Combined Court could vote the required revenue taxes. Colonial politics, Guiana's unique and awkward constitution, the labor shortage and the planters' insistence on immigration, were all woven into a complex web.

With the prohibition on Indian labor in effect, other areas of possible labor supply began to look promising. The Governor of Sierra Leone, R. Doherty, wrote to Lord John Russell in early 1840 that many liberated Africans, landed in that colony by the British Navy in their suppression of the slave trade, were unemployed and had expressed a desire to return to their native part of Africa. Russell told Doherty

that he was free to allow them to emigrate to British Guiana, Jamaica, or Trinidad.[91] In March of 1841 Russell wrote to Sir John Jeremie, the new Governor of Sierra Leone, encouraging him to facilitate the emigration of Africans to the West Indies. The Colonial Secretary said that such an interchange would be of mutual benefit to both the West Indies and the liberated Africans.[92] Two representatives of the "free coloured" of Baltimore, Nathaniel Peck and Thomas Price, toured Guiana in January 1840 and reported favorably on the conditions there.[93] As early as 1835 almost six hundred laborers had come to the colony from Madeira. The high mortality rate of these first Portuguese workers ended the experiment for a period of four years. But the demand for labor was so great that a renewed attempt was made in 1841 as more than 4,300 Portuguese laborers emigrated to British Guiana.[94] The Portuguese proved to be as unsuccessful in the early 1840's as they had been in 1835 and many of those who had arrived as agricultural workers either returned home or moved to the towns to become petty merchants and traders. The planters felt that the West Coast of Africa and India would be the most profitable areas of labor exploitation. They were ready to employ almost any device at their disposal to secure this labor. Governor Light felt that a great deal of the tumultuous cries of ruin were calculated to hasten immigration. The planters argued that the shortage and irregularity of the labor of the Negroes was the cause of the need for immigration. Immigration was not necessary, countered Light, because of the indolence of the laborers, but to replace those who had chosen not to work on the estates.[95] It was further necessary to make up for the difference in output due to the absence of coercion. The reports of the Stipendiary Magistrates

and the circuits of Wolseley all concluded with the need for immigration. The most persistent opponents of immigration were the abolitionists who feared that the introduction of a large number of laborers from places like India would significantly lower the wages of the newly emancipated Negroes and once again throw them on the mercy of the planting class. In retrospect, this analysis seems to be quite accurate. This was exactly why the planters wanted immigration. When they spoke of a shortage and irregularity of labor, the planters were speaking in relative terms. In essence they were bemoaning their loss of control over the labor supply, a control which had once been total and considered normative, but which had been terminated because of abolition.

The whole question of a new immigration ordinance was involved in the negotiations which Henry MacLeod, serving in a mediatorial role as Acting Governor in December 1840 and January 1841, undertook with the colonial members of the Combined Court. Prior to MacLeod's departure and Light's resumption of his office, the Civil List was passed and on 18 January 1841 an Immigration Ordinance was approved. As has been noted in a previous chapter, the Colonial Office objected to the control the Ordinance gave to the Combined Court to set and raise the sums to be spent on immigration. Negotiations dragged on over this issue but the Ordinance, neither approved nor disallowed, operated as law in the colony. Governor Light, while aware of the inconsistencies between the ordinance, passed while he had been temporarily replaced by MacLeod, and Russell's draft proposal of the previous year, decided to proceed with immigration. He appointed James Hackett of Canada as Agent-General for Immigration. A system of bounties was established and in an executive proclamation Light enunciated a series of

regulations for the protection of the laborers. No further bounties were to be paid to any agent if after three months the number of male and female emigrants from his port of embarkation were not equal. The prospective laborers were to be in good health and fully informed of the probable conditions and means of subsistence in British Guiana. The Governor's proclamation listed detailed regulations as to shipboard accommodations, the provision for a medical doctor, and food allowances. If, upon arrival, the laborers did not find immediate employment, the Government would provide food and lodging for them.[96]

In May 1841 Light reported to London that the colony had purchased a steamship to provide speedy intercourse with the islands.[97] Emigration from the islands was never as great as the planters hoped. This was due mainly to the hostility of the local authorities to any attempt to diminish their labor supply as well as to the competition from Trinidad and Jamaica. Agents of these two colonies frequently spread rumors that snow, ice and pestilence would destroy those laborers who went to British Guiana.[98] In fact, Governor Light hesitated appointing paid agents to any of the islands, except Nevis, precisely to avoid the complaints of undue interference or tampering with the laborers to induce them to emigrate to British Guiana.[99] Nevertheless there was a considerable voluntary influx. The period 18 February to 30 June 1841 witnessed the arrival of over 1,700 immigrants, 941 from the islands and of this number 741 came from Barbados. In this group 363 came from Madeira and 200 from Sierra Leone. The ratio of men to women was not equal, but considerably better than in the past.[100] Governor Light's attention frequently was

directed toward the state of the Portuguese immigrants. From 23 January to 14 October 1841 2,950 Portuguese workers entered British Guiana.[101] On the island of Leguan in the Essequibo River almost ten per cent of these immigrants died and by the end of November, 281 of the 3,000 Portuguese had died.[102] In the month of December 1841 alone, another 151 died.[103] Governor Light reported to Lord Stanley that it was doubtful if the Portuguese, or any white men, could be acclimated to agricultural labor in British Guiana.[104] The year 1841 did see an overall increase in the population of British Guiana of 8,144 by immigration. Of this figure, 4,297 came from Madeira, and 2,745 from the West Indies.[105]

The debate over the emigration of Africans and Indians, on a large-scale, to the West Indies raged in England in the years 1840 to 1842. In April 1839 the old Anti-Slavery Society had been re-organized as the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society with all the force of its auxiliary societies, petitioning of Parliament, and memoralizing the Government. One of its first activities in 1840 was to publish John Scoble's accounts of conditions in British Guiana.[106] The Melbourne Ministry by 1840 had already agreed that emigration, properly regulated, was acceptable. The Colonial Office, investigating the situation in Mauritius, found that while abuses had existed, they were not irremediable. James Spedding's Minute of May 1840 expressed this view:

> I find that though there are many irregularities in the system . . ., yet there is not crying evil in their condition, and probably no evil at all which can be so effectually remedied as by plans now in contemplation. The climate seems to suit them well, and the shortest way to remove other accidental evils to which they are exposed will be to place

> the whole system under the superintendence of some central authority with adequate power and on the spot. I can hardly doubt that the removal of all reasonable ground of complaint on their behalf is quite within the reach of such an authority.[107]

Lord John Russell, introducing the Colonial Passengers Bill in the 1840 Session, included a section for the regulation of the emigration of "Hill Coolies." The clause limited contracts to one year and included a provision for a greater number of women emigrants. Stephen Lushington, a veteran abolitionist, led the attack against this proposal. Lushington was successful in having the Hill Coolie clause struck from the bill.[108] The time was not propitious for its passage. The humanitarian barrage of charges of mortality and mistreatment of the coolies in Demerara and Mauritius was too strong. Most members of the House of Commons agreed with the position of some of the Directors of the East India Company that all the information on the condition of the Indians was not in as yet and it would therefore be best to delay approval.

From 1834 to 1839 about 25,000 coolies emigrated from India. The halting of the traffic was mainly due to what now must be recognized as exaggerated accounts of its horrors. These accounts were seized upon by an aroused humanitarian spirit fresh from its victory of shortening the period of apprenticeship and jealous of its role as guardian of the interests of the emancipated slaves. Although a bit overstated, there seems to be some truth in E. C. Archer's charges against Lushington and the forces opposed to even regulated emigration:

> So full are your thoughts of this monster upon which they have so long dwelt that your mind's eye can perceive nothing else within its range. Service in your opinion then is slavery. You have battled waking so long, so enthusiastically and so successfully against

> the demon that now when he has fled the
> field which was the arena of your triumphs,
> you still combat him in your dreams.[109]

The impetus for emigration from Africa and India was advanced by the advent of Lord Stanley as Colonial Secretary in September 1841. Stanley was concerned about the plight of the planter class. Writing to Light in December 1841 he remarked: "My satisfaction at the state of the colony would be more complete if, amidst the indications of general comfort and prosperity, my attention was not arrested by the fact that the decrease of exportable produce is continuing at a rate alarmingly rapid."[110] Stanley sponsored and sat upon a Select Committee of 1842 constituted to inquire into the state of the West India colonies. Its report found that the progress of the emancipation experiment was favorable. At the same time, the members of the committee concluded that serious injury had been done to the planters. One of the main causes of the injury, they felt, was the cheapness of land and the lure of workers away from the plantations. It was agreed that immigration, conducted by responsible public officials, was the remedy.[111] Under Stanley's aegis, the African labor 'market' was opened to the West Indian planters in 1843, under the superintendence of and regulated by the British Government.

The question of India still remained. West Africa as a source of labor proved less than satisfactory. Emigration from Sierra Leone was hindered by white merchants and traders, Negro hucksters, and missionaries, as well as by the suspicions of Africans landed from captured slavers.[112] Governor Light informed London of the return to India of most of the coolies who had arrived in 1839. Of the 414 who embarked at Calcutta in 1838, 18 died on the passage and of the 396 landed in the colony, 236 returned to India in May 1843. One hundred had died in the colony

in the five years, and sixty had decided to remain in British Guiana.[113] The experiment had proved moderately successful. The coolies were more adaptable to the climate and labor demanded than the Portuguese and other Europeans. In a memorandum to Prime Minister Peel, Stanley expressed the attitude adopted by the Tory Government. The Colonial Secretary confessed that he thought it "very difficult to find grounds for resisting a remission of a prohibition for the worst paid portion of our fellow subjects to transport themselves voluntarily and free of engagements, at the expense of colonies ready to receive them, to places where their labour is in great demand and will be well remunerated."[114]

The prohibition of the emigration of coolies to Mauritius was rescinded in late 1842 and in 1843, under Government supervision, over 23,000 Indians went to work in that island.[115] In a January 1844 petition to London, planters in British Guiana pointed out that their colony was considerably larger than Mauritius and more in need of labor. Finally, on 3 July 1844 authority was sent by the Board of Control to the Governor-General to withdraw the prohibition against emigration to Trinidad, Jamaica, and British Guiana. Provisions of the Imperial Passengers Act were to be in force for all vessels employed in the service. Emigration was to take place between 1 October and 1 February, the season being limited by bad weather off the Cape of Good Hope. At least twelve per cent of the emigrants were to be women. Each ship was to have a qualified doctor on board.[116] The final barrier had been overcome; in the eyes of the planters, their demands had been met. First Africa and now India was open to them as a source to replenish their labor supply.

Another factor which must be touched upon, although only briefly, is the relation of immigration to the then rising issue of free trade and the abolition of colonial preference on sugar. The sugar industry in the West Indies had been built on the twin pillars of slavery and a fiscal system which secured its products a monopoly in the home market. This monopoly, changed to preference under Huskisson, was eroded by the admission of sugar from Mauritius at the same rate in the mid-1820's and from all of British East India in the mid-1830's. The architects of free trade attacked this preference as an unnecessary financial burden on the British consumer, inefficient economically, an anachronism from a different age. The attack on the 'sugar monopoly' was not simply an issue of monopoly versus free trade, but it involved a whole web of opposing interests and constituencies. Benjamin Disraeli remarked that the tremendous agitation over "this singular article of produce," reflected that complexity: "It is that all considerations mingle in it: not only commercial but imperial, philanthropic, religious, confounding and crossing each other, and confusing legislature and nation lost in a maze of conflicting interests and contending emotions."[117]

Behind the question of the increasing domestic demand for cheap sugar was the whole question of the slave trade. Even if only foreign free labor sugar were admitted at a substantially lower rate, the European market would suffer a shortage because the advantages of the British market were so great that a large amount of free labor sugar would be exported to England instead of the continent. This 'sugar vacuum' in Europe would be filled by slave grown sugar from Brazil and Cuba. Thus, in the instance of sugar, free trade would aid slavery.

The first volley in the battle was fired in June 1839. William Ewart moved in the House of Commons that free labor sugar be admitted to the

domestic market at the same duty as the colonial product.[118] There was little support for this and the motion was not pressed in that session. Nevertheless, rumors circulated among the planters of British Guiana about the attempts to abolish their preferential duties. The matter was mentioned by "Erinensis" in the Gazette of 7 September 1839. A new crisis in their fate, the author reported, was fast approaching. The attempt had been unsuccessful but the spirit that prompted it was not dormant. If this proposal was ever passed their doom was sealed:

> Arise then! Awake to the danger which impends. Fritter not your valuable time in speculating on your opposition to Officials, and curtailing the paltry salaries of your ministerial servants, but rouse yourselves to the task of saving, if you can, your own properties from destruction. You must not look back to the past -- the world is against you when you advocate slavery -- look to the present and future. Take a lesson from those who assail you. Convene a meeting forthwith -- frame resolutions vindicating yourselves -- and petition to the House of Commons. It is unjust to suppose the British Public is deaf to reason.[119]

Again in June 1840 Ewart introduced his motion, but this time he proposed to reduce the duty on all foreign grown sugar to 34s. per cwt. while keeping the duty on colonial sugar at 24s. per cwt. Ewart had concluded that it would be nearly impossible to distinguish always between slave and free grown sugar since the sources and intermediaries often handled both kinds without distinction. This motion was defeated soundly due to the opposition of the Melbourne Government, who opposed the idea of importing any slave grown sugar.[120]

Circumstances changed, however, in 1841. The Whig Government was faced with a large financial deficit which could either be met by increasing direct taxation or substituting protective for prohibitive duties.[121] The Government decided on the latter course, expecting to

raise £700,000 by reducing the duty on foreign sugar from 64s. per cwt. to 36s., i.e., 12s. above the colonial rate. By such a reduction in the duty the Government expected enough foreign sugar to enter the domestic market so that the 36s. per cwt. rate would significantly increase the public revenue. The whole scheme only differed from what Ewart had proposed, and the Government opposed the previous year, by 2s. In arguing the Government's case, however, Russell adopted Ewart's arguments that the competition would stimulate the inventiveness of the West Indian planters. Those who favored the proposal also contended that the distress at home (high price of sugar) overrode considerations of colonial preference and that other slave goods were imported into England anyway.[122] One can imagine the horror of the humanitarians at a Whig Ministry proposing a motion that would so favor slavery. The debate over this proposal in Parliament in May and early June 1841 was heated. The West Indians responded that continued protection was needed because of the problems consequent upon emancipation. Representatives of the new industrial constituencies, utilitarians, and radical economists fought the battle of free trade -- world trade as opposed to the hampering constrictions of merely colonial trade.[123] In a larger sense, the new industrial-economic forces were arguing that the old imperialism was dead; it was inefficient and unproductive; free trade would be the new watchword of British supremacy. British markets in Latin America and the United States had already far outstripped the value of formal colonies in the West Indies. These colonies were relics of a by-gone era, to be cast into the fires of progress, according to the immutable laws of economics. In the 1842 debate, J. A. Roebuck, M. P. for Bath and a staunch supporter of free trade, remarked: "What

benefit was it to the manufacturers, that they should pay dear for sugar, in order that they might have it to say that they had a colony called Jamaica?"[124]

Despite these arguments for the lowering of the duty on foreign sugar, the Government's motion was defeated. The Tories opposed it, so did the East India interest and the humanitarians. A motion of no confidence in the Melbourne Government succeeded; the Ministry resigned; elections were held in the summer of 1841 and Sir Robert Peel came to power in September with Lord Stanley as Colonial Secretary in a Conservative Government.

At the highpoint of the debate in May 1841, The Times published a trenchant analysis of why it opposed the proposal of the Melbourne Government. According to The Times, the relationship between master and slave had been ended abruptly and it would take some time to adjust to the new relationships of a free society. With social and economic conditions still unhinged, society still recovering its equilibrium from a revolution inflicted upon it by Parliament -- as Peel, had said, staggering under the shock of the experiment -- the cry of cheap sugar was thrust on the planters with as much force as ten years ago 'no slavery' had been. Concurrently, the attempts of the planters to secure alternate labor through immigration had been thwarted. Parliament, in the opinion of The Times, owed it to the planters to protect them from the trauma of any fresh experiment. At a time when the sugar planter was still confused by the new state of affairs, beset by labor problems of immense proportion, it seemed unfair to demand of him that he offer the English market his sugar as cheap as that of Brazil of the Philippines.[125]

The Peel Administration had come to power over the defeat of the attempt to lower the duty on foreign sugar. With Lord Stanley as Colonial Secretary, the Government was a bit more sympathetic toward the grievances of the planters. This is not to say that Russell was unsympathetic, but there seemed to be a change in emphasis. While Russell supported immigration, Stanley really pushed it, although he was skeptical about how successful it would be.[126] Governor Light was not at all sure that immigration was the "panacea" that the planters hoped for. Wages would not be diminished, nor the other expenses of an estate decreased by the introduction of any possible number of laborers, unless at the same time such modes of management were adopted as would secure a more profitable cultivation of the soil.[127]

The December 1841 meeting of the planters in Georgetown was illustrative of their narrow view. The reason for failure was not theirs at all. Wages were too high; labor too irregular and not sufficient. The Governor contended that the planters were just going to have to learn how to be employers of free labor; that when labor was scarce, and coercion outlawed, free labor required good management and tact.[128] The planters decided at that December meeting to combine together and reduce wages to thirty-two cents per day for a full seven and one half hours of work as of 1 January. The Negroes refused to accept such a reduction and Light informed them that they were not obliged to comply.[129] Some missionaries advised them not to work. All attempts by the planters to enforce these reductions were unsuccessful and only further strained relations between the two groups. With no legal method of implementing their decision, and the Government at best neutral, the planters were not in a position to make a stand for any length of time. Many of them

were on the brink of ruin -- the drainage canals had to be kept up, the fields planted and weeded. When the Negroes, many of whom had some savings, did not work week after week, the planters were forced to give up. First one and then another planter gave in and by March the strike was virtually over.[130] The Gazette consistently advocated conciliation, pointing out in a February article that an estate could still be profitable at the old rate of wages. What was needed, according to the Gazette, was a thorough-going overhaul in the management and methods of the plantation. The role of the attorney and manager ought to be combined and overseers should be raised to a higher rank and protected from the arbitrary caprice of the managers, so that they might become more interested in the welfare of the estate. "The old system was tyranny altogether -- the attorney lorded it over the manager, the manager over the overseers, the overseers over the drivers and the drivers over their fellow slaves. As the lower steps of this pyramid of tyranny had been removed there seemed no advantage in retaining the other two."[131]

The immediate result of the abolition of slavery and the termination of apprenticeship was a tremendous dislocation within Guianese society. The policies of the British Government in both London and Georgetown seriously threatened the social, political and economic predominance of the plantocracy. The effects of the revolution effected by an Act of Parliament cut across all segments and sectors of life in the colony. Many of the normal, traditional mechanisms of social control had been rendered ineffective. As mentioned in the beginnings of this study, slavery was much more than an economic system; it was at the very center of colonial social and political intercourse, the

justification and the reason for all forms of colonial activities. It was no longer. All elements in the colonial society had to adjust to the new legal situation of freedom. Many of the emancipated slaves took their freedom literally and abandoned the estates for life in Georgetown or on a freehold tenure of their own. The planting class fought to reassert that easy sway in colonial affairs which had been resolutely sapped during the 1830's. They employed every lever at their command. Thus, politics, constitutional questions, economics, all blended together. Their analysis of their situation caused them to demand immigration on a large scale. At first the British Government was reluctant, fearful of domestic politics seeing in this a revival of slavery. But London was not in a very good position to oppose this demand of the planters. The Whig Ministry, saved by the "Bedchamber Crisis," was well aware of the need to pursue a policy of conciliation in regard to British Guiana. But perhaps more than this was the ideological commitment to free labor -- that, in the last analysis, British subjects had the undeniable right to offer their labor wherever they so desired. Emigration could not really be forbidden; it could only be regulated.

With immigration from India assured by 1844, the foundations had been set for a reassertion of the economic predominance of the planters within British Guiana. When enough laborers had finally arrived, the planters could disregard the Negroes with impunity; a new labor force had been found. Legal coercion of the Negro had ended and his resultant economic independence had greatly disturbed the planters. The planter class had faced the vicissitudes of a free labor society by trying to circumvent that society. It was after all a situation in

which they were novices. But it was clear that with the approval of large-scale, publicly financed immigration, the planters had won this labor battle. Their ascendancy in this area was sure now to be reaffirmed. As noted above, the reasons for this victory encompassed colonial and imperial politics. And perhaps even more significantly, in an era of growing emphasis on free trade the implications of that victory were to be more local than imperial. The West Indies and British Guiana would quickly fall out of the limelight of British imperial and domestic politics.

It should be noted that the introduction of vast numbers of Indian laborers was to alter irrevocably the socio-political-economic destiny of the colony. They were Hindus and Muslims, aliens from the other side of the globe, non-believers in the Christian God, many of them followers of the 'obscure' system of caste, and most importantly, nearly three hundred thousand chose to remain in British Guiana as their permanent home. The social transformation which these Asian peoples underwent and the interaction with Guianese society is yet another story.

Chapter VI Notes

1. Ragatz, op. cit., p. viii.
2. Light to Stanley, 23 November 1841, C. O. 111/181.
3. Testimony of Mungo Campbell before the "Select Committee on the West Indies," Parliamentary Papers 1842, Vol. XIII, No. 479, p. 152.
4. Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 65.
5. Smyth to Glenelg, 13 June 1836, C. O. 111/145.
6. Ibid.
7. Testimony of Henry Barkeley before the "Select Committee on the West Indies," Parliamentary Papers 1842, Vol XIII, No. 479, p. 174. Also Testimony of Mungo Campbell, p. 147.
8. Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 89.
9. Ibid., p. 90.
10. Ibid.
11. Smyth to Glenelg, 27 June 1836, C. O. 11/145.
12. Glenelg to Smyth, 31 October 1836, C. O. 111/146.
13. Ibid.
14. Smyth to Glenelg, 22 December 1836, C. O. 111/146.
15. Glenelg to Smyth, 1 March 1837, C. O. 111/149.
16. Sir George Grey to J. H. Albouy, 8 June 1837, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.
17. Ibid.
18. Grey to Albouy, 19 October 1837, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.
19. Albouy to Glenelg, 26 October 1837, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.
20. Grey to Albouy, 13 November 1837, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.
21. Governor Nicolay (Mauritius) to Glenelg, 23 January 1836, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.

22. Nicolay to Glenelg, 25 July 1836, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.

23. Glenelg to Nicolay, 25 May 1836, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.

24. Report of J. P. Woodcock to Governor-General Auckland, 19 November 1836, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.

25. Glenelg to Nicolay, 14 May 1837, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.

26. Ivy M. Cumpston, Indians Overseas in British Territories 1834-1854. (London: Oxford University Press, 1953), p. 21.

27. John Gladstone to John Hobhouse, 23 February 1837, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.

28. Hobhouse to Gladstone, 25 February 1837, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.

29. Gladstone to Glenelg, 27 February 1837, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.

30. Sir George Grey to John Gladstone, 10 March 1837, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.

31. Gladstone to Grey, 23 March 1837, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.

32. Glenelg to Gladstone, 3 May 1837, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.

33. Glenelg to Gladstone, 16 May 1837, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.

34. Gladstone to Glenelg, 28 February 1838, with enclosure of Gladstone to G. Arbuthnot and Company, 10 March 1837, in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 180.

35. Glenelg to Light, 26 May 1838, C. O. 111/161.

36. Light to Glenelg, 30 August 1838, C. O. 111/161.

37. Ibid.

38. Hansard, Vol. 41, 6 March 1838, p. 416.

39. Gazette, 8 May 1838, quoted in Peter Ruhomon, A Centenary History of the East Indians in British Guiana, 1838-1938. (Georgetown: The Daily Chronicle's Guiana Edition, 1946), pp. 26-27.

40. The Times, 26 May 1838; see also Wellington to Glenelg, 2 May 1838, C. O. 111/161.

41. The Times, 26 May 1838.

42. The Times, 12 July 1838.

43. Gordon to Grey (Enclosing Minutes of the Court of Directors), 12 July 1838, C. O. 111/161.

44. "Copies of Two Orders in Council, dated 30th July 1838, Respecting Indentured Africans in the Colonies," in Parliamentary Papers 1837-38, Vol. LII, No. 728.

45. Governor Light to the Governor of the Bahamas, 15 August 1838, C. O. 111/158.

46. Light to Glenelg, 4 September 1838, C. O. 111/158.

47. Light to Glenelg, 1 October 1838, C. O. 111/158.

48. Glenelg to Light, 19 December 1838, C. O. 111/158.

49. Glenelg to Light, 6 November 1838, C. O. 111/158.

50. Light to Glenelg, 1 November 1838, C. O. 111/158.

51. Light to Glenelg, 19 November 1838, C. O. 111/158.

52. Ibid.

53. Light to Glenelg, 11 January 1839, C. O. 111/162.

54. British Emancipator, 9 January 1839, referred to Cumpston, op. cit., p. 43.

55. John Scoble, British Guiana: Speech Delivered at the Anti-Slavery Meeting in Exeter Hall on 4 April 1838. (London, 1838).

56. Light to Normanby, 6 May 1839, C. O. 111/163.

57. Report of W. B. Wolseley and T. Coleman enclosed in Light to Normanby, 13 April 1839, C. O. 111/163.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid.

61. Ibid.

62. Light to Normanby, 21 May 1839, C. O. 111/163.

63. Light to Normanby, 13 April 1839, C. O. 111/163.

64. Ibid.

65. Light to Normanby, 8 May 1839, C. O. 111/163.

66. Light to Normanby, 16 July 1839, C. O. 111/164.

67. Ibid.

68. Light to Russell, 4 April 1840, C. O. 111/171.

69. Light to Russell, 15 March 1841, C. O. 111/177.

70. Light to Russell, 6 December 1839, C. O. 111/166.
See also: Raymond T. Smith and C. Jayawardena, "Marriage and the Family Amongst East Indians in British Guiana," Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 8, No. 4 (1959), pp. 321-76, and by the same authors, "Hindu Marriage Customs in British Guiana," Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 7, No. 2 (1958), pp. 178-94. Also, Leo Davids, "The East Indian Family Overseas," Social and Economic Studies, Vol. 13, No. 3, (1964), pp. 383-06.

71. Light to Normanby, 14 October 1839, C. O. 111/166.

72. Light to Normanby, 26 June 1839, C. O. 111/164. One dollar equalled 4s. 2d.

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

75. Normanby to Light, 15 August 1839, C. O. 111/165.

76. Ibid.

77. Russell to Light 7 September 1839 and 30 September 1839, C. O. 111/165.

78. Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 99.

79. Light to Normanby, 18 September 1839, C. O. 111/165.

80. Light to Russell, 23 December 1839, C. O. 111/166.

81. Russell to Light, 15 February 1840, C. O. 111/170.

82. Ibid.

83. "The Report of the Bengal Committee," Parliamentary Papers 1841, Vol. XVI, No. 45, only referred to conditions in Mauritius: "Of the state of things in the West Indies we are uninformed by evidence."

84. Russell to Light, 15 February 1840, C. O. 111/170.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid.

87. Russell to Light, Second Despatch, 15 February 1840, C. O. 111/170.

88. Russell to Light, Second Despatch, 15 February 1840, C. O. 111/170.

89. Light to Russell, 6 June 1840, C. O. 111/171.

90. Light to Russell, 22 June 1840, C. O. 111/171.

91. Enclosed in Russell to Light, 9 June 1840, C. O. 111/171.

92. Ibid.

93. Light to Russell, 15 June 1840, C. O. 111/171.

94. Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 98.

95. Light to Russell, 15 September 1840, C. O. 111/172.

96. Light to Russell, 23 February 1841, C. O. 111/177.

97. Light to Russell, 4 May 1841, C. O. 111/178.

98. Light to Russell, 1 June 1841, C. O. 111/178.

99. Light to Russell, 5 July 1841, C. O. 111/179.

100. Ibid.

101. Light to Stanley, 24 October 1841, C. O. 111/180.

102. Light to Stanley, 22 November 1841, C. O. 111/180.

103. Light to Stanley, 21 January 1842, C. O. 111/189.

104. Ibid.

105. Light to Stanley, 20 January 1842, C. O. 111/189.

106. John Scoble, Hill Coolies. A Brief Exposition of the Deplorable Condition of the Hill Coolies in British Guiana and Mauritius and of the Nefarious Means by which they were induced to resort to these Colonies. (London, 1840.)

107. Minute of James Spedding, 7 May 1840, C. O. 167/218.

108. Hansard, Vol. LIV, 22 June 1840.

109. E. C. Archer, A Letter to the Rt. Hon. Stephen Lushington . . . (London, 1840), quoted in Cumpston, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

110. Stanley to Light, 16 December 1841, C. O. 111/181.

111. "Report of the Select Committee on the State of the West India Colonies," Parliamentary Papers 1842, Vol. LII, No. 479.

112. W. P. Morrell, British Colonial Policy in the Age of Peel and Russell. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1930), p. 158. See also Report of the Trinidad Agent to Governor MacLeod, 18 October 1844, in Parliamentary Papers 1847-48, Vol. XLIV, No. 732.

113. Light to Stanley, 1 June 1843, in Parliamentary Papers 1843, Vol. XXXV, No. 404.

114. Peel Papers. Stanley to Peel, 27 November 1843, quoted in Bell and Morrell, Select Documents on British Colonial Policy, 1830-1860. (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1928), p. 423.

115. Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., p. 103.

116. Cumpston, op. cit., p. 78.

117. Benjamin Disraeli, Lord George Bentinck: A Political Biography. (London: Colburn and Company, 1852), p. 530.

118. Hansard, Vol. XLVIII, 28 June 1839, p. 1023.

119. Rodway, Vol. III, op. cit., pp. 55-6.

120. Hansard, Vol. LV, 25 June 1840, p. 76.

121. Cumpston, op. cit., p. 60.

122. Mathieson, op. cit., p. 146.

123. Ibid.

124. Mellor, op. cit., p. 139.

125. The Times, 8 June 1841.

126. Morrell, op. cit., p. 165.

127. Light to Stanley, 23 November 1841, C. O. 111/181.

128. Light to Stanley, 4 December 1841, C. O. 111/181.

129. Rodway, op. cit., pp. 61-64.

130. Ibid.

131. Ibid., p. 64.

Chapter VII

The Plantocracy: Triumphant, but Uncomfortable Oligarchs

The immigration schemes and political-constitutional machinations of the British Guiana planters reveal their reactions to the new social order. Their analyses and arguments serve to illuminate aspects of another, perhaps deeper, socio-psychological crisis. The economic decline was psychologically unsettling. The theories of wages, labor and land were employed to explain the decline, but in the final analysis a more 'adequate' villain was needed, a more despicable symbol. It was only a crisis severe enough to cause a collapse of the old economic system that brought about such a disruption in the social structure inherited from slavery. And it was to these revolutionary circumstances which the planters were reacting.

The majority of the planting class was convinced that they were the victims of a vast, multi-pronged conspiracy. They considered the colonial and imperial Governments, long the representatives of their interests, to have deserted them and to have assumed an attitude of active hostility. The Stipendiary Magistrates, the ever-present 'creatures' of the new system, the supposed dispensors of local justice, were pro-Negro in the eyes of the planters.[1] Governors Smyth and Light were mere puppets of an imperial rule which had become truly imperial in the worst sense of the word. The chief executives of colonial society did not share any common interests with the planting class. They surrounded themselves with advisors who were not planters, men who

were not members of the "colonial aristocracy."[2] The British Government treated them, so they felt, like "step-children." The Combined Court and College of Kiezers were the repositories of the legitimate interests of the colony. In attempting to subvert their authority, the Colonial Office, ignorant of the true state of affairs in the colony, was the real revolutionary force.[3] Those in control of the British Parliament were enamored by "cheap charity"; it was all very well to gain the glory for the emancipation of the slaves by paying only two-fifths of their value.[4] The colony was near ruin, but the officials of the local government refused to admit it. The official members of the Court of Policy were misled, first, by their own desire to obtain intelligence favorable to the success of emancipation, which prompted them to consult with the wrong people; and, secondly, "by two or three planters whose minds have a singular bias, derived probably from their Whig politics, especially him [obviously McTurk] who is called the governor's member in the court."[5]

Ever since the passage of the Reform Bill, the British Government, in the eyes of the colonial oligarchy, was controlled by "the weavers of cotton and broadcloth."[6] The workings of "self-interest in a party so strong as the manufacturing is in England, must ultimately prove dangerous to the state: it is an <u>imperium in imperio</u> -- a power capable of ruling the rulers of land."[7] The plantocracy resented the intrusion of Parliament and the Whig Government into what the planters considered to be their own autonomous areas of concern. In a stinging rebuke to the attempts of the House of Commons to interfere in the affairs of Jamaica, that colony's Assembly issued an eloquent protest, comparing the state of the two countries, which reflected the mood of all of the colonial legislatures in the British West Indies:

> The House [of Assembly] does not dread a comparison with the Commons of England in the success of their legislation. Our laws have not been defied, as by the Irish opponents of tithe. Murders are not committed in our island by companies of armed men in open day; nor do bands prowl about at night setting fire to the barns and ricks of corn; nor do our labourers and artisans combine, as of late in Dublin and Glasgow, to raise wages, even by maiming and murder. Our courts are never occupied with the obscenities which disgrace England nor do our husbands and daughters resort to them to expose their shame for a money price. The horrible trade of Burke (and, we fear, of many more) which has given a new word to the English language was never heard of here; nor have we ever known an instance of parents putting their infant families to death to save them from the protracted sufferings of starvation. It is not in Jamaica that unfortunate mothers outrage nature by the destruction of their new-born offspring to avoid the cruel persecution of a hard-hearted and destroying morality; nor is it under our laws that wretches commit suicide to escape the refuge which is provided for worn-out and aged industry. We have no Corn Laws to add to the wealth of the rich, no Poor Laws to imprison, on pretence of maintaining, the poor. We cannot, as the English Parliament does, boast of a pauper law which has taken millions from the necessities of the destitute to add to the luxuries of the wealthy . . . . We dread a system of Government which has, despite so many efforts, failed to pacify Ireland, has just caused a rebellion in Canada by its capricious policy and scarcely escaped a war with the United States.[8]

The comparison was a bit unfair. A society like Jamaica's in 1838, which was still reasonably static (although not for long), and composed of a majority of persons largely in a state of subordination, possessed more apparent social cohesion than a dynamic, changing society like England in an era of reform.

Nevertheless, the planters felt they were the sacrificial lambs on the false altar of philanthropy. They felt like the frogs in the ancient

fable; their destruction, if not sport for the people of Great Britain, certainly was not considered of very great importance.[9] By the early 1840's it appeared that a fresh attack, in the form of a reduction in their preferential treatment in the domestic sugar market, was being mounted against them. As Barton Premium wrote in 1841, the attempt to change the sugar market was successfully opposed, "thanks to Sir Robert and the Conservatives."[10] Five or six years later they would certainly have a different view of Sir Robert.

The planters considered this attack on the very foundations of their economic existence to be the work of the newly ensconced manufacturing interests who were the champions of free trade: "They have long desired to open the ports of the world to their goods, at any injury they may inflict on what may be called the bulwarks of our constitution; and now, drunk with prosperity, they aim at rivalling in rank and power, as well as wealth, the hereditary legislators of the land . . . ."[11] The sense of alienation was great: "posterity will read of the zeal with which a whole nation, actuated by the noblest and most philanthropic motives, prosecuted the emancipation of our slaves, even at the risk of injuring, to a ruinous extent, the unfortunate holders of such property, bought under the national guarantee . . ."[12] Parliament was pursuing a "tyrannical and devastating" policy of deliberate ruin in regard to the West Indies. "What was the taxation of America to this?" "Men may learn from our fate, what the weak have to expect under the prevalence of the democratic principle, and the administration of mob-ruled government."[13] Adherence to free trade would be like throwing a weight on a person after he had been thrown, with his hands tied, into a river.[14] A century prior to Albert Camus' classic description of despair and alienation,

Barton Premium wrote in 1846: "It has been a task like the punishment of Sisyphus to carry on cultivation of our colonies for the last eight years."[15]

The wrath of their anxiety was not solely directed at the government. The missionaries and the Anti-Slavery Society received their share of the blame. Convinced of missionary complicity ever since the famous Smith case of 1823, the planters looked upon them as troublemakers "too often opposed to lawful rule and right supremacy."[16] It was felt that the missionaries provided all kinds of misinformation for 'lunatic' statements in Parliament and 'ill-advised' articles in British periodicals. The old anti-slavery party had become the anti-colonial faction, tied in interest with the "proud cotton lords of Lancashire."[17] It was these people who disseminated all sorts of lies about the planting class among the credulous people in England. "I verily believe, if Mr. Scoble should tell them that we dine on Negro steak every day, they would believe it."[18] Scoble "contrived his visit here to sow seeds of distrust between the labourers and their employers, and to form a new cabal of which he was the nucleus, to create discord everywhere; a strange thing for a man to earn his bread by telling baseless tales of other people -- a new trade in these times of novelty."[19]

Even the Guiana Gazette, viewed with suspicion by most of the planters, spoke with alarm and indignation at the attitudes of Scoble and many of the missionaries:

> Every missionary meeting, every missionary sermon is seized upon as an opportunity for relating actions of horrid cruelty, and inspiring abhorrence of slavery and slave proprietors. The piteous condition of the slave is described with eloquence. Orators and preachers tell of his stripes, his chains and incarcerations, while his

master is represented as devoid of all feelings of remorse, and as enjoying an inward satisfaction at witnessing the most appalling scenes of blood.

When a planter makes a fortune and goes home to enjoy the fruits of his labour, he is regarded by many as a monster, and every misfortune that happens to him, however trifling, is termed a judgment of Heaven for his wickedness, cruelty and roguery, in the West Indies. Children are taught to lisp his name in disgust, he is eyed by the rich with suspicion, while the poor bless God that they are not rich by means so unholy. All these opinions and prejudices are strengthened by opposition to the Anti-Slavery advocates. When such feelings actuate the mind every unfavourable report, true or untrue, will be treasured up, nursed and kept warm, and then sent forth flaming in the shape of speeches to the ignorant and enthusiastic but at the same time well-meaning and benevolent assemblies, and in petitions to parliament signed by thousands -- rich and poor, small and great. Then there is a host of ladies collecting penny a week subscriptions for Missionary Societies, who explain in every house they go with all their moving power of rhetoric, the glorious and pious uses of the pennies. They tell the little children who contribute that it is to relieve the poor Negro, whose limbs are galled with iron chains, who have no light or knowledge of Christ nor of His Gospel, who is put in the yoke like an ox and cut up with whips until his back is laid open with deep gashes. These and many other lying and inflamatory representations are weekly related to innocent and credulous persons, and West Indians are held up to the lisping babe, the shining-faced schoolboy, the full-grown man, and the man of grey hairs, as inhuman monsters, and unworthy to be reckoned among those whose hearts ever felt an emotion of sympathy or were touched with a sense of justice.

With what derision and contempt will a community thus influenced and prejudiced behold the powerless and malignant attacks upon the advocates of abolition. Even supposing every word they said were true it would not be believed in England because it is regarded by all there as the ebullition of an enemy's heart.

We will not (like the Chronicle) treat Mr. Scoble either as a liar, a spy, or a sower of sedition, but as a gentleman of high moral character, but at the same time one whose zeal for the rights of humanity has got the better of his judgment.[20]

Barton Premium wrote in a very harsh tone of those philanthropists and humanitarians who comprised the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society and the Aboriginees Protection Society. In his view, they had taken upon themselves:

> . . . the care of all the people on the face of the earth . . .; and a strange thing it is, that a number of gentlemen, most of them seldom out of London, should be seized with the inclination to rule mankind in this manner, especially that portion of it which knows just as little about the patronising society as the latter know of them. It is an easy thing for those men, over their wine, to sit in judgment on their fellow men -- to damn the West India planter -- save the New Zealand cannibal -- and hug themselves by such omnipotent deeds. But while the world laughs at them, there is still an exceptional portion of the political population, who find their account of leaguing with, and cajoling those their simpler brethren; and they are our deadly foes, the anti-colonial faction of Britain, powerful already, and yearly adding to their dangerous influence.[21]

Coupled with this analysis of a vast conspiracy against them, an integral part of their Weltanschauung, was the planters' conception of the Negro. To a large extent, the planters were guilty of what they accused the official members of the Court of Policy of doing -- selecting evidence to support preconceived notions. For the planters, apprenticeship had ended too quickly. The only reason the expected violence did not take place was because of the moral influence of the Europeans. The planters had argued against emancipation on the basis that the freed slave would flee from plantation labor and civilized society and return to the barbarism of 'the bush'. While this literally did not take place, the planters saw in the lack of ample and continuous labor justification of their fears. Without coercion the Negroes sought the "gratification of their passions" and not the "quiet pursuits of industry."[22] They were children:

> Are these the sons of steady and continuous industry? No, no; there is too much of the sun in the fiery fluid that circulates within -- too much of the African rover of the woods, to labour if he can live without it -- too little of the European mind, to know the advantage of a settled occupation.[23]

With the absence of control, in a word coercion, and the antipathy of the stipendiary magistracy, the planter felt at the mercy of his former slaves. Coercion was needed because of the Negro character, and, after all, the only difference between the slave and the free laborer was that under slavery "the fee simple of service had been brought, not only for his own life, but that of his posterity."[24]

The Negro, the planters argued, had not been improved by emancipation. The easier possession of money encouraged drinking, fighting and riotous behavior; night-time orgies were common-place. They were like children out of school, "or, if you will, the dog out of chain -- they manifest a degree of exultation in being able to set at defiance the regulations of the estate."[25] The high wages only made the merchants of Water Street in Georgetown prosperous. The "morals" of the laboring population, instead of increasing, had decreased. "The people are more wicked than they were ten years [1833] ago."[26] Concubinage was as rampant as ever. There had been an increase in formal marriages, but this was only a ritual, a matter of convenience.[27]

The defeat of the attempts of the planters to reduce the wages in early 1842 only reaffirmed their view that they were the victims of hostile forces. *Premium*, somewhat prematurely, concluded in 1843 that the Negroes were the dominant class in the colony because in all local arrangements regarding labor, "the fact is too notorious that the Negro has it his own way."[28] All attempts to frame laws which would keep

the Negroes on the plantations, e.g., Vagrancy laws, and which would improve their "idle habits," were habitually opposed by the "Anti-Colonial Party." The "licentiousness" of the laboring population was the cause of ruin: "What, I would ask any one, could be expected of a people for whom others thought and acted previously, when suddenly, and without preparation, set free from the wholesome restraint which had been imposed on them by plantation regulations, and who had never done anything without the guidance and counsel of their masters -- and especially when, in addition to the removal of restraints they found themselves possessed of funds which they never dreamed of having the disposal of?"[29]

The argument that slavery was no more than "wholesome restraint," however ludicrous, does go far to portray the attitudes of the planters. This last passage reveals a deep sense of a loss of power, a loss of coercion. Thus, the planters cried for a whole new laboring population, "adequate for our wants" -- which obviously included a willingness to be coerced, although through indentured contracts. Without such immigration, the Negroes, through their extensive purchase of property, would ultimately become "lords of all."[30]

Any attempt to fathom the depths of the attitudes of the planters must consider the pervasiveness of the plantation as the fundamental cultural-economic-political unit of society, and the attack made upon this institution by the abolition of slavery. Not only did emancipation end coercion in a direct sense, but also the rapid rise of Negro freehold tenure deprived the estates of an essential ingredient of their success. Prior to 1834, free laborers in British Guiana would not work on the plantations, feeling it was a badge of slavery to do so. It was not difficult to see why they held this view, nor why many ex-slaves

in the post 1838 era wished to escape from the bonds of plantation society. This meant decline for the plantations, but not necessarily for the colony when viewed from a larger perspective. Most of the planters did not possess such a vision. They were wedded to estate planting; they saw no use in a 'fractured' system of small freehold tenure. Only a few, like Edward Carberry, took advantage of the former slaves' desire to own their own land, by subdividing portions of their estates in an attempt to maintain a constant, albeit part-time, work force. The commitment of the planters to their particular method of large-scale sugar production was not solely based on what they considered to be the economic advantages of such an undertaking. The economic advantages of sugar production by this method in British Guiana were obvious -- the geographical and topographical hardships requiring sea walls, and drainage and irrigation canals, necessitated considerable amounts of capital. The production of sugar in Guiana, the 'sugar frontier' if you will, was a big man's frontier. But in addition to this, there was a certain mystique about the great plantation system, the colonial landed aristocracy, the natural leaders of society; that somehow political balance and social equilibrium depended upon this element in society. There was a "greater nobility" in the raising of certain crops. Thomas Carlyle wrote of this:

> The islands are good, withal for pepper, for sugar, for sago, arrowroot, and coffee, perhaps for cinnamon and precious spices; things far nobler than pumpkins; and leading toward commerces, arts, polities, and social developments, which alone are the noble product, where a man (and not pigs with pumpkins) are the parties concerned! . . .

> No; the Gods wish besides pumpkins, that spices and valuable products be grown in their West Indies; this they have declared in so making the West Indies.[31]

As late as 1865, the Jamaica Colonial Standard argued:

> Above all, let the people understand that without the produce of the large properties we should have scarcely any export trade, and consequently no contact with the world outside sufficient to keep us in the march of civilization and improvement: and that without the existence of an upper class giving tone to society by its manners and example, they [the Negroes] would soon revert to a state of barbarism.[32]

While British authorities in other colonies, like Jamaica, agreed with the planters that Negro freehold tenure was retrogressive. Governor Light espoused the view that in the long run such activities were beneficial for British Guiana.[33] From the point of view of the Negro settler, escape from the estates was tangible proof of his new freedom; it was more than merely a change in his legal status. The planters were, in the last analysis, unable to cope with the Negro free labor market created by emancipation. Many plantation owners expected to live the serene life of country-nobles, aloof from the cares of the speculative, capitalistic environment which gave them their wealth.[34] Prior to 1838 they were confident that the West Indies, despite a lot of evidence to the contrary, would continue to provide them with unending profits and thus they gave little thought to the need for expanding markets, technological innovation, or for overcoming wasteful practices. When economic decline, long latent in the system, was accelerated, and from their point of view caused, by the abolition of slavery, the ruling class began to lose confidence in their future -- to such a point that Premium could write in 1840 that "fear preponderates over hope" among the proprietary class.[35] But the planters did not

give up hope, they tried desperately to keep a sinking ship afloat, and they were temporarily successful. They were able to secure a new, tractable, source of relatively cheap labor, and oblivious to its rammifications proceeded blithely in the pursuit of their short-run interests.

Still another reason for the rather narrow view of the planters in regard to the economic health of the colony and the production of sugar was the somewhat ambivalent position of the European in British Guiana. The planters were Europeans resident in British Guiana. They frequently applied English ideas of economics and politics to the tropical environment. They never attacked emancipation in principle, but only in terms of some of its specific manifestations and results. They borrowed British economic ideas and used them, especially the theory of wages, to explain the decline experienced in their free labor society. But at the same time they resolutely refused to re-evaluate their ideas about the planting system and its right operations which had grown out of their experience in the colony.

For the British planter, British Guiana existed only to be exploited. The system of absentee proprietorship sapped the colony of good leaders. A man really became a member of the élite only when he qualified as a potential absentee. Thus, to a certain extent, "colonial élite" was a contradiction in terms. It referred to men whose means permitted them to be élite rather than colonial.[36] Those who were resident, in a country generally regarded as not a fit place for Europeans to live, constituted an oligarchy and found in its maintenance the sole compensation for their exile. Men of the stature of John Gladstone were to be found in Liverpool not Georgetown. This factor,

it seems, goes far to explain the lack of a grander vision, some more all-embracing attitude toward the welfare of British Guiana, a welfare which had ceased to be coterminous with the plantocracy. Lord Stanley caught some sense of this lack of identification with the fundamental interests of the Colony:

> The planters of British Guiana do not, perhaps, consider their own interest and those of their offspring as permanently identified with the colony in which they are now following their fortunes; but it is for the well-being of the colonies themselves that their affairs should be conducted in a more enlarged and comprehensive spirit, with a view to their permanent interests, as component parts of the great colonial empire of Great Britain, and not with the short-sighted view of avoiding, or throwing upon the resources of the mother-country, every expense which is not absolutely called for by the immediate and pressing exigencies of the day.[37]

It is in this context that the planters' determination to insure their predominance must be understood -- the use of their economic power through the Combined Court to secure the recognition of their continued prerogatives there as well as the granting of immigration to assure the re-emergence of their mastery of the labor scene. The vast revolution had been forced upon British Guiana from the outside, but the beneficiaries of the revolution remained politically submerged. The confusing period immediately following emancipation provided the former slaves with a degree of freedom, legal and economic, which they had not had before. The old ruling class, for reasons economic, political and psychological, reasserted its predominance and eventually took over the day to day control of a new order it had never desired. We have already traced the outlines of the reassertion of the power of the planters in regard to their power in the Combined Court and their victory in the immigration struggle. But all their schemes ignored

the central problem, the need to integrate ninety per cent of the population into the political, economic and social affairs of the country in which they resided. A far-sighted Jamaican planter saw this need clearly in 1839:

> I have said, in the commencement of these observations, that the African race must ultimately become dominant in the West Indies, and this may appear to some a startling doctrine . . . the case we are now considering is altogether an unprecented [sic] conjuncture, and it cannot be said that there is any actual impossibility, in the European landholder continuing to cultivate his estates, and enjoy the profits of it in security, thought the great majority of those filling superior situations in Jamaica, should be descendents of the African race. This, to be sure, is the grand problem to be solved; this is the revolution, which to bring about gradually and beneficially, will require the exercise of great wisdom and policy; and here is the high and honourable task which is thrown upon the nation.[38]

It required, in the final analysis, more "wisdom and policy" than the ruling class in the West Indies could be expected to supply.

The Europeans, Africans and Asians were all intruders in British Guiana. There were few indigenous Amerindians left by 1840 and they were safely ensconced in the interior. The Europeans, following emancipation, retained their ascendancy, despite some shakey moments, and the old social and class distinctions were preserved. The social order had always been an artificially created one. The Negroes were a servile people from a foreign land and they yearned to be Europeans, not Africans. This factor also supported the claims of the Europeans, representatives of that culture most highly valued among both races, to a superior role in the affairs of the colony.[39] The prevalence of schools, on the English model, in the new Negro villages, and the number of children sent to them, illustrated the concern and value put on English education. The churches formed another nucleus for the

activities of the new villages. As M. J. Herskovits has pointed out, the cultural focus, or those aspects of the life of a people which holds the greatest interest for them, was in the field of religion for the Caribbean Negro. It was religion, whether obeah, or myalism, or Christianity, that dominated their social lives.[40] The religious sanctions supporting the obeah and myal men gave them a position in the community above the prestige of ordinary slaves. They were personages with whom the common man had to deal with a mixture of respect and fear. The missionaries, especially the Baptists during slavery, helped to develop a group of Negro catechists and lay leaders.[41] The fact that some Negroes were already in positions of traditional leadership, and in an area of "cultural focus," backed by the sanctions of religion, helped to guarantee that, on emancipation, the slave community would be able to draw upon leaders of its own. The extent to which they did this must await further in-depth study.[42] The important factor here is that Christian Churches and English schools were instruments for stressing the value of European education and culture, without of course being able to transform the Negroes into Europeans. Modern sociologists and ethnologists who have studied Guianese society agree in their analysis that the Negroes and the Whites all came to share a common social conception in which things English and 'white' were valued highly, while things African and 'black' were valued lowly.[43] What came to count among the Negro population was the generational distance one had from Africa, i.e., the degree of Creolization, and the amount of white blood in one's veins. One planter recorded the following argument between two Negro women, one berating the other for laughing at her husband, which illustrates this concern:

> 'You laugh my man, eh -- you laugh my man, eh, mamma -- eh, mamma?' 'Kay, sissie, me no laugh bad -- da good laugh me laugh.' (Meaning that she was joking.) 'You is a vile nigga mamma, no bit of lady bout you; dat is what you is.' The other had hitherto been cool, but she now sprang to her feet, and assumed the same belligerent attitude as her opponent. 'You say me no lady, you saucy, good-for-nothing Congo dat you is.' 'Me Congo!' exclaimed the first then, in a very shrill tone, as if that had been the climax of impudence; 'me Congo! da liard you is. You know bery well me dooble Creole; you is Ebbo, dough! nasty Ebbo, wha savee, eat dem mattie.'[44]

But what gave the system which valued things white and European its distinctive character was the element of color. The ineradicable symbol of birth status was accepted as inferior, non-white, non-European. No matter how well-educated, how 'properly' behaved, it was impossible to become fully white. Martin Carter, a contemporary Guianese Marxist, has written of this psychological alienation: "Out of the complex of situations, traditions, influences that have gone into the making of the way of life in this region, the institution of slavery in the beginning lies at the foundation of the psychological make-up of the people . . . . Emancipation in the 1830's took the chains off the hands and the feet, but the psychological constitution woven in the gloom of the plantation remained."[45] And it was this factor, as well, which assured the ascendancy of the white plantocracy in the political and societal affairs of British Guiana.

It was in this overall attitudinal complex that the planters grasped immigration as the panacea. They had analyzed the cause of the malady, and prescribed the remedy. They pursued immigration in the post 1844 years with a passion and continued for some time to ignore the economic inconsistencies of their method of production.

They failed to come to terms with the Negro laborer as an independent person in a free society. To a very real extent the British Government aided this process. By the early 1840's, outright opposition to the colonial oligarchy was unrealistic -- domestic politics and ideological outlook precluded it. The colonial members of the Combined Court used their power effectively to gain most of their desired ends in regards to immigration.

Finally, British Guiana and the West Indies just were not worth the effort any longer. It was to be the era of free trade; the old colonial system which spawned the settlements and economy of the West Indies was no longer tenable or of great import. Speculative capital flowed to Latin America and the United States where the return was high and the expense of maintaining a colonial establishment unnecessary. British Guiana was henceforth to be considered a backwater of Empire, of passing interest at best, part of a dimly lit stage which was once the great battlefield of slavery and monopoly. There would be occasional controversies between Georgetown and London in the future, but not of the scope or magnitude which encompassed their relations in the 1830's and early 1840's. The planting oligarchy reasserted its ascendancy because Britain cared less and less about either the welfare of the Negroes or the economic state of the colony. It would be another century before humanitarian impulses would wrestle with conditions in Guiana to the degree that they had over the abolition of slavery.

The abolition of slavery had disrupted Guianese society -- the winds of change blew through old valleys of constitutional, political and economic controversies and opened up new chasms in matters of labor and immigration policies. The once easy ascendancy of the plantocracy

was shaken in the years 1833 to 1841. The planters did emerge triumphant, but the society in which they assumed their predominance was one which was imposed upon them by the revolutionary rammifications of emancipation. They were 'rulers' in a strange land, Turks in Egypt, oligarchs fundamentally uncomfortable with the legal definitions of the social order they came to dominate.

Chapter VII Notes

1. Testimony of Mungo Campbell and Henry Barkley before the "Select Committee on the State of the West Indies," in Parliamentary Papers 1842, Vol. XIII, No. 479, p. 147 and p. 174, respectively.
2. Barton Premium, op. cit., p. 81.
3. Ibid., p. 25.
4. Ibid., p. 28.
5. Ibid., p. 40.
6. Ibid., p. 44.
7. Ibid., p. 87.
8. Statement of the House of Assembly of Jamaica, 16 June 1838, C. O. 140/129 -- quoted in Burn, op. cit., p. 74.
9. Premium, op. cit., p. 84.
10. Ibid., p. 83.
11. Ibid., pp. 191-192.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p. 193.
14. Ibid., p. 203.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid., p. 146.
17. Ibid., p. 49.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid., p. 50.
20. 17 October 1838, quoted in Premium, op. cit., p. 37-8.
21. Premium, op. cit., p. 91.
22. Ibid., p. 10.
23. Ibid., p. 14.
24. Premium, op. cit., p. 30.

25. Ibid., p. 39.

26. Ibid., p. 137.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., p. 141.

29. Ibid., p. 143.

30. Ibid., p. 187.

31. Thomas Carlyle, "Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question," Fraser's Magazine, XL, December 1849, pp. 674-5. For a comprehensive study of the mystique of the plantation and the 'big house', as well as the question of sexuality in the relations between black and white, see Gilberto Freyre, The Masters and the Slaves. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956.) Freyre's study is about Brazil and he speaks of a "Brazilian Feudalism" -- "In the agrarian zone, along with a monoculture that absorbed other forms of production, there developed a semi-feudal society, with a minority of whites and light-skinned mulattoes dominating patriarchally and polygamously, from their Big Houses of stone and mortar, not only the slaves that were bred so prolifically in the senzales [slave quarters], but the sharecroppers as well, the tenants or retainers, those who dwelt in the huts of mud and straw, vassals of the Big House in the strictest meaning of the word." -- p. xxix. It was this overall picture of "casa grande" and "senzala", in the opinion of Freyre, that came to represent an entire economic, social, and political system: a system of production (latifundiary monoculture); a system of labor (slavery), religion (family Catholicism), and a system of sexual and family life (polygamous patriarchalism).

32. Colonial Standard, Kingston, 16 May 1865 -- quoted in Curtin, op. cit., p. 118.

33. Curtin, op. cit., p. 120.

34. Davis, op. cit., p. 158.

35. Premium, op. cit., p. 27.

36. David Lowenthal, "Race and Color in the West Indies," in Color and Race, edited by John Hope Franklin. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), pp. 302-348. See also, Douglas Hall, "Absentee-proprietorship in the British West Indies, to about 1850," in Jamaican Historical Review, Vol. 4, 1964.

37. Stanley to Light, 12 October 1842, C. O. 111/193.

38. T. H. Milner, The Present and Future State of Jamaica Considered. (London, 1839), pp. 26-7.

39. Raymond Smith, op. cit., p. 41.

40. M. J. and F. S. Herskovits, Trinidad Village. (New York: 1947), p. 6. Myalism and Obeah were indigenous West Indian voodoo practices.

41. Curtin, op. cit., p. 31.

42. Raymond Smith and M. J. Herskovits have done some preliminary work in this area.

43. Smith, op. cit., p. 41.

44. Premium, op. cit., p. 74.

45. Quoted in Michael Swan, op. cit., p. 124.

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Colonial Office 295 and 296 -- refers to the introduction of indentured labor in Trinidad.

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1840, Vol. XXIV, No. 82: Copy of a Circular Despatch dated 5th November 1839 addressed by Lord John Russell to the Governors of the West India Colonies, transmitting an Order of Her Majesty in Council relative to immigration into Trinidad.

1840, Vol. XXIV, No. 151: Copies of Reports from, or Despatches to, the Governor of British Guiana, respecting the Hill Coolies introduced into that Colony since the date of the Papers last laid on the Table of the House.

1840, Vol. XXIV, No. 288: Copies of, or extracts from, the Memorial of Mr. Schomburgk, who lately explored the interior of British Guiana, under the direction of the Geographical Society of London, addressed to the Governor of that Colony, and laid before the Court of Policy at Demerara on the 1st day of July 1839, relative to the grounds of claim advanced by the state of Venezuela to that portion of British Guiana situated between the rivers Orinoco and Morocco on the West, and the claim of the Brazilian Government to that portion lying between the Essequibo and the Rio Branco on the South and West: -- Also, a copy of, or extracts from, any despatches received by Her Majesty's Government, relative to the invasion, in 1838, of that portion of British Guiana lying on the eastern side of the river Tacutu, by a detachment of Brazilian militia, under the command of Senhor Duarte, and the forcible deportation into slavery of a body of Indians residing under the protection of Great Britain, on the pretext of impressment for the Brazilian Navy; and the dispersion in 1839, by a Brazilian force under Senhor Pedro Ayres, of the Protestant Mission under the auspices of the Church Missionary Society of England, established at Pirara, a village of the Macusi Indians within the territory of British Guiana.

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