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BARBADOS IN THE APPRENTICESHIP PERIOD: THE REPORT OF A FRENCH COLONIAL OFFICIAL

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INTRODUCTION

Prior to the abolition of slavery in its own colonies in 1848, the French government had long expressed an interest in the possible social and economic consequences of emancipation. For this reason France tried to closely follow the effects of emancipation in the British Caribbean colonies, and over the years sent observers to various British territories. These observers were charged with gathering specific information on issues which the French government considered significant in assessing the consequences of emancipation and the creation of a nonslave labor force.

The first of these observers to come to Barbados was apparently A. Bernard, then the Attorney General of the Royal Court at Guadeloupe, who also visited Antigua and Jamaica.¹ His published report on Barbados, submitted to the French Colonial and Naval Minister and dated April 1836 (but based on a visit in the previous year), is translated in this article. On January 2, 1837, about eight months after Bernard's report, another French team arrived which was headed by a Mr. Pudeilham, "the Commissioner appointed by the French government to enquire into the working of the Apprenticeship throughout the British West Indian Colonies";² there is no record, however, that the report of this team was ever published. Finally, in late 1840 or early 1841, another group surveyed various British colonies in order to study the effects of the termination of Apprenticeship. The leader of the group that visited Barbados was a naval officer, Captain Jean Francois Layrle; we have translated his report, submitted to the French Minister of Naval Affairs and dated June 1, 1841, in the two previous volumes of this *Journal*.³

Judging from the reports of Layrle and Bernard,⁴ the French observers were not reluctant to insert their own evaluations and judgements of what they saw and heard, but they were all essentially looking for the same general types of social and economic information. The broad charges given to Bernard, in particular, were delineated by him in the introduction to his report on Jamaica. His mission, he noted, had three major objectives: 1) "to

ascertain the internal and topographical conditions of each of these colonies as they relate to the Act of Emancipation"; 2) "to verify the influence of this Act on labor output and agricultural production as well as the value of colonial property"; 3) "to gather together legislative and other acts which have resulted from the Act's implementation."⁵

We are not certain when Bernard arrived at Barbados and how long he stayed. Internal evidence, however, suggests that the visit occurred around the middle of 1835 (see notes 16, 22, 24, below) and was rather brief, probably no more than a week or two. Bernard's direct conversations seem to have been largely, if not entirely, with whites — colonial officials, planters, special magistrates.⁶ He clearly knew English well enough to read and translate it into French, and he was obviously sent to the British islands because he spoke English, though it is difficult to say how well.

Viewed from a modern perspective, Bernard's report provides little information on the Apprenticeship period that is not available in other more detailed contemporary accounts;⁷ and, as with Layrle's report, we do not maintain that it offers important insights into the changes that were occurring in Barbadian society. Yet, Bernard's account, though somewhat less informative than Layrle's, is nonetheless of historical interest, and it also presents the comparative view of a French colonial official on the administration and functioning of a British colony.

With a few exceptions that are indicated in our notes, we have translated Bernard's report in its entirety. Our insertions are indicated by brackets in the text, and the editing procedures are generally those that were employed in our translation of Layrle.⁸

Barbados. Apprenticeship period (years 1834 and 1835): Report made to the Colonial and Naval Minister by Mr. Bernard, Attorney General of the Royal Court of Guadeloupe.

April 1836

1. Topography — Agriculture

Barbados is 7 leagues long by 5 wide. Its area is 102,380 and one-half acres, and extends across various plateaus, of gradual increasing height, from the seashore to the center of the island. Beyond is the territory called Scotland. This land, cultivated

exclusively by the Scottish tribe which inhabits it and after which it is named, offers one of the most remarkable points of the Antilles for its agriculture and the fertility of its soil.

Barbados has no mountains as high as those elsewhere in the Antilles; its peaks do not exceed 1,000 feet above sea level. In the southern part, not a single hill is higher than 300 feet. Except for a few breaks, formed by the arid escarpments separating the plateaus and by rather deep ravines, the land is entirely under cultivation, and no parcel is without an owner.

The colony has no fewer than 400 sugar works and plantations.⁹ I was unable to learn the number of properties with other crops, but their products count for little in the island's exports; these principally consist of sugar, secondarily of ginger, and even of a certain amount of food crops.

Agricultural production seemed to me excellent, and the crop rotation system on which it is based is very skillfully practiced.

The planter has not produced in excess one crop at the expense of another, and the problem he confronts and which he has successfully solved can be summarized as follows: to combine the cultivation of food crops with that of sugar in such a way that the size of the sugar harvest is smaller but free and clear of the production costs which, in other places, place a surcharge on too much production. The order of crop rotation is as follows: 1) first crop cane; 2) shoots or ratoons; 3) sweet potatoes and millet; 4) millet and guinea grass; 5) pasture or new plantings, with the addition of fertilizer.

One plantation, which follows this crop rotation system, is average in size and one of the best managed in the colony; it is the _____, belonging to M. B _____,¹⁰ and covers 300 acres, with a Black population of 170. It does not have more than 40 acres in first crop cane and 40 in ratoons. On the average, it produces only 100 hogsheads, but, at the same time, enough food is raised for the needs of the plantation population and enough forage for the livestock which will eventually be butchered for salted meat. Thus, the owner has only to pay out such inevitable expenses as the overseer's wages, doctor, surgeon, and apothecary fees, figured at one dollar per Black, and, finally, the cost of clothing and of a small quantity of fish. Since these expenses are largely met by the profits from molasses and rum, etc., the result is that all the sugar produced is net profit; and this profit for the plantation in question, although realized at a time when sugar sold at its lowest price, was not less in 1835 (according

to the sales records I am consulting) than 1,500 pounds sterling, that is 37,500 francs.

Another plantation (V), situated in Saint Thomas, one of the most fertile parishes on the island, and having approximately 500 acres and 290 Blacks, is framed on the same crop rotation system. Its average yield is 300 casks. This plantation, belonging to Mr. S , was leased to Mr. H , himself a landowner and one of the wealthiest attorneys on the island, for the duration of the Apprenticeship, that is until 1840, at the annual rent of 4,000 pounds sterling (100,000 francs). ¹¹

The plantation of G , located in Saint-Michael and having only 44 acres and 24 apprentices, is also farmed by this system; it was rented out, for the same period of time, at the price of 300 pounds sterling (500 francs).

If I emphasize this method of farming utilized on plantations of diverse sizes, it is because it seems to me to have far-reaching effects from two points of view. It is easy to understand how the market or rental value of property must have been influenced by the existence of a net profit, free of the precarious conditions of excess production costs which elsewhere weigh with such disparity on goods that are produced. In my opinion, there is no doubt that that influence has converged with the successful practice of mortgage buying to encourage the development of credit. During my stay in Barbados mortgage buying had already been established to such a point that I have seen offered in the newspapers the investment of 5 to 6,000 pounds sterling at an interest rate of 6 per cent with the usual guarantees required.

On the other hand, I cannot help believing that this type of farming has diminished the feeling of repugnance and of irritation which accompanies the farmer's labor under the opposite system. This has come about by constantly impressing on the mind of the Black the idea that his own labor is exerted, in a large measure, for the production of his own means of sustenance and that the landowner profits from it to a lesser degree.

2. Population

The population census on record in the parishes showed 101,288 people in 1829. ¹² I have reason to believe that this figure is lower than the real one because the Black population totals 82,807 and the Whites number no fewer than 15,000. It is obvious that the Colored population (whose growth in Barbados has progressed no

less than in the other English colonies) is greater than the difference between the total for Blacks and Whites and the island-wide figure reported in 1829. ¹³

As for the number of the Black population, its accuracy can be trusted: it is the figure of the Commission formed in London for the distribution of compensation claims. In what follows, I break down this figure according to sex, occupation and age of the individuals. ¹⁴ The 1832 census figure was 81,500; the difference between that and the 1834 census is therefore 1,307. The number of freedmen no longer registered as slaves is 750; thus, the total number of the increase is 2,057.

The average price for each individual, determined on the average value of slaves over an 8 year period from 1822 to 1830, was evaluated by the Commission of Compensation at 47 pounds, 1 shilling, 3 1/4 pence sterling. This figure multiplied by the population figure gives the sum total of 3,897,276 pounds, 19 1/2 shillings. However, the sum allocated to Barbados was reduced to 1,721,345 pounds, 19 shillings because of the inadequacy of the 20 million pounds voted by Parliament. The result is that the average per capita indemnity paid to the owner does not exceed 20 pounds, 15 shillings. The cost of the services of a laborer during the Apprenticeship period (that is, until 1840) has been valued juridically at 20 pounds sterling; by adding this figure to the allowed compensation, one arrives at 40 pounds, 15 shillings. Since the average of the price fixed by the London Commission was 47 pounds sterling, it follows that the immediate loss to the planter resulting from the Act of Emancipation has been more than 7 pounds sterling per slave.

3. Produce and Market Value of Property

Here is a table of sugar exports for the years 1833, 1834, 1835.

Years	Hogsheads	Tierces	Barrels
1833	27,015	1,507	651
1834	27,593	1,464	1,083
1835	23,637	1,264	896
Difference	3,956	200	187

The above difference [between 1834 and 1835] approximately represents the reduction in production corresponding to the reduc-

tion in labor which must have resulted from the portion of time reserved for the apprentices' own use; but one must not overlook the fact that in Barbados the labor force exceeds the needs of cultivation.

Following my instructions, I had to determine what might have been the Act of Emancipation's effect on the market value of property. However, since August 1, 1834, there have been only a very small number of sales, and these, having consisted only of nominal transfers, could not be of great importance in answering the question. I have attempted to elucidate the question by looking at judiciary appraisals, and I must say that these appraisals have not seemed to me to be lower than the appraisals made prior to the passage of the Emancipation Act. I have even become aware of one plantation whose valuation supposedly exceeded by 1,000 pounds sterling the valuation which had been made earlier; however, the sale did not take place and therefore no conclusion can be drawn from that valuation. Moreover, it must be pointed out that because of internal conditions in Barbados, its agriculture, trade, and wealth, the immediate effects of the Act must be less noticeable here than elsewhere. It must also be said that this colony, as well as Antigua, is placed in such exceptional circumstances that its inhabitants consider themselves, and perhaps rightly so, to be destined to benefit for a rather long period from the difficulties of the other colonies; and this feeling, the selfishness of which I don't claim to excuse, is not, moreover, without some effect on the rental or market value of property.

4. The Legislature and the Judiciary

Since Barbados has always been an English colony, legislative and judiciary powers are organized in the same way as in Antigua and Jamaica; I will therefore not dwell at length on the nature of their organization.

The Governor of Barbados is at the same time Governor-General of the islands of Grenada, Saint Vincent, Tobago, and of their respective dependencies; he is also Chancellor, Vice-Admiral and Commander of the Armies, etc. His Majesty's Council is composed of 11 members, the honorific presidency belongs to the Bishop, and the president in fact is the oldest Council member.¹⁵ A secretary and a chaplain are assigned to this body. There are 22 members of the Colonial Assembly; they are elected by the 11 parishes, each being represented by 2 members.

The principal public officials are, as in the other colonies, the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, the Advocate General, the Receiver, the Council Secretary and Notary Public, the Police Constable, the Clerk of the Chancellery (who is also the Crown's assistant clerk), the Deputy Provost-Marshal, the Colonial Treasurer, the Storekeeper and the Deputy Postmaster, the Captain of the Port, the Inspector of Weights and Measures, the Superintendent of the Town Hall and of Prisons.

The jurisdiction of the Court of Common Pleas is divided into 5 precincts. There are 52 Justices of the Peace. Certain officials, such as the Attorney General, the Bishop, the Archdeacon and the Speaker of the House are Justices of the Peace by right. Each parish has the services of a coroner.

5. Stipendiary Magistrates

Barbados did not succeed, like Antigua, in repudiating Apprenticeship. The state of mind of the Black population did not permit this; but, because of its limited area, in the administration of justice Barbados succeeded in adopting a different method from the one adopted in Jamaica. Six magistrates were sent from the mother country to Barbados. As a result, the colony was divided into 6 distinct districts. ¹⁶

At the most central point of each of these districts, spacious and uniform buildings were constructed at great cost. These areas consist of a large building, part of which is occupied by the courtroom and its related offices, and the rest is assigned to the lodging of police officers, the caretaker, and other employees.

Behind this building a large enclosure has been constructed where devices for punishment are permanently installed and which are at the disposal of the magistrate. In this enclosure are found the whipping racks, the treadmill, and the shop where rocks are broken for road maintenance — in short, everything that relates to hard labor. One of the sides of this enclosure contains the detention rooms. The prisoners lay on a platform rather like the camp-beds set up in our barracks. The difference is that at the base of the platform 2 boards are stuck together in which holes have been made; these holes hold fast one of the legs of the prisoner so as to reduce him to a state of almost absolute immobility.

Another building, located at the back of the court yard, contains cells used for solitary confinement; there are 16 such cells.

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Solitary confinement is one of the improvements introduced into the modern penitentiary system adopted by America and England. It must be the case that philanthropy has its cunning and cruel side, just as it has been said that gentleness and charity have their moments of emotion and anger. It is impossible not to be impressed with the means used to perfect isolation in the creation of solitary prison cells, as well as with the ingenious art with which they have combined circulation of the air and a complete deprivation of light. Therefore, among the kinds of punishment at the magistrate's disposal, none is more effective than solitary confinement; and in many cases experience has shown that the stubbornness of those Blacks most enured to the whip and the treadmill yielded in the face of this kind of punishment. I have applied myself to studying the effects of it, and of the number of cases that I have observed one will never be erased from my memory: it is the state of change and prostration of a young Negress whose appearance, 24 hours before her imprisonment, had appeared to me resplendent with energy and daring.

Moreover, the special magistrates cannot give a sentence of more than 14 days of solitary confinement. Even then, it must be said in praise of their humaneness, they make it their duty to visit the prisoners every day and to suspend that punishment if circumstances warrant it.

The magistrate holds audiences every day from 10 until 4. I have calculated that the daily average of cases that they had to judge was 40.

Below is the summary of crimes or offenses committed by the apprentice class, from August 1, 1834 to August 1, 1835.

<i>Nature of the crimes or misdemeanors</i>	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Insubordination and improprieties of behavior	856	747
Neglect of work or absence from employment	2,666	1,848
Misdemeanors or willful damage to property, illegal grass harvesting	326	123

Thefts	288	79
Miscellaneous	<u>770</u>	<u>654</u>
Partial Totals	4,906	3,451
General Total	8,357	

This is an official document: I am indebted to the kindness of the Governor [Sir Lionel Smith] for its communication. In the face of these statistics of punishments, can one say, with the zealous abolitionists, that the question of freed labor is solved in the English colonies? Does it really follow that a situation of voluntary labor without any kind of coercion will result from a system where labor was obtained with the help of the whip, the treadmill, and solitary confinement?

6. Religious Institutions

Barbados is the seat of the Diocese of the Leeward Islands. In its relationship with the Established Church of England, it is divided into 11 parishes, containing 23 churches and chapels and served by 29 clergymen. It has 155 schools which give religious and elementary instruction to 7,047 people. Not only has the Church of England not lost any of its former importance, but daily its influence grows progressively greater.

Below is a table comparing the number of clergymen and of charity schools in the diocese for the years 1812, 1825, and 1834¹⁷ The number of people belonging to the Church of England [in 1834] and under the spiritual care of its 81 clergymen [in the diocese] is 34,830. This figure is relatively small compared to the total population of the diocese, which is 408,105. As for the number of individuals attending schools, it was 22,208 at the end of 1834.

The development of schools [in Barbados] and of elementary instruction is principally due to the enlightened leadership of the important and venerable ecclesiastic at the head of the diocese.¹⁸ It is through his efforts that schools have been established in the countryside where today more than 3,000 individuals are receiving religious and elementary instruction; moreover, his pious efforts are strongly supported by prevailing public opinion.

There is no one who fails to understand the influence which the civilized state of the worker population is bound to have on the future of the colonies. I cannot help but notice the enthusiasm with which the Blacks seem to seek the benefits of instruction for themselves and especially for their children; their ardor needs to be contained so that the total work effort does not suffer.

In order to avoid the loss of time caused by sometimes travelling great distances, several planters have offered to open free schools on their plantations for the apprentices.¹⁹ The latter have refused the offers of their former masters and have preferred to attend, at their own expense, the established schools. This is explicable by their mistrust of their masters, born of their memories of slavery and their disappointment with the apprenticeship situation which they see less as an advantage than as prolongation of slavery.

7. Methodists

The progress made by the Methodists in Barbados is much less evident than in the other English colonies. The instrument of the Society for the Abolition of Slavery, and supported to a large degree by subsidies from it, the Methodists have awakened distrust in the country to the highest point. It must be said that this distrust has erupted into the most violent demonstrations.²⁰ These were caused, perhaps, by the too ardent and premature attempts of the Methodists to combine the abolition of slavery with the continuity of labor in the interests of all, especially in the interests of the Black population.

At the end of 1834 the Methodists had five churches in the colony; however, these five churches had no more than 383 members, of whom 267 were of the free class and 116 of the slave population. They had only three schools giving instruction to 333 pupils and the figure breaks down as follows:

	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>
Free class	34	39
Slaves	109	151
Total	333	

I have taken these figures from a report published at the end of 1834 by the Methodist Society, without attempting to explain the

noticeable disproportion in the number of slave pupils when compared to the number of individuals of the same class belonging to the Methodist congregations.

Whatever the case, I have not been able to precisely ascertain the present condition of that Society; however, their progress, although quite noticeable, has remained proportionately small among the Black population of the island. It is conceivable, however, that the legal abolition of slavery has deprived this sect, as well as others supporting emancipation, of their most powerful instrument of influence and of proselytism.

8. The Moravian Brothers

The excellent congregation of the Moravian Brothers has been deprived for a long time of the support which has helped it to enjoy such a salutary development in Antigua.²¹ At the end of 1834, it only had 2 stations, those of Sharon and Mount Tabor, and 4 missionaries.

Now, a new station has just been formed at Bridgetown,²² and more missionaries are expected at any time. The Sharon station counted 1,687 individuals under its spiritual care. That figure breaks down as follows:

Communicants	321
Baptized adults, not communicants	382
Children baptized, under 12 years of age	325
Adults undergoing instruction for baptism	318
Novices	296
Excluded novices, but in the process of repentance and about to be readmitted	<u>45</u>
Total	1,687

The Mount Tabor station only numbered 200 members, distributed proportionally according to the preceding breakdown. As for the Bridgetown station, it was also in the formative stage, but there is reason to believe that its progress will be rapid. Antisecular prejudices, which had been inappropriately directed at the Moravians, are completely eliminated at present. The respect which the clergy, even of the Anglican Church, strongly professes for the congregation can only contribute to its development.

Moreover, here are a few details on the practices of this congregation. I am quoting from a letter from the venerable Brother [John] Taylor: "The instruction given to the congregation consists of a public sermon, every Sunday at 11 a.m., then a meeting for children, followed by the examination of those who are studying the catechism; then comes a lecture to the adult members of the congregation. At 7 p.m., reading and explanation of the holy scriptures. Monday and Thursday evenings, schools for adults and children. Wednesday evenings, general assembly and sermon, followed by an exclusive meeting to which only communicants are admitted. On Sundays, school from 7 to 11 o'clock."

"Since August 1, 1834, the Moravian Brothers have created, in addition, schools for children at two of their stations; these schools meet daily, and in each of them 44 pupils learn to read, write, and count. The other schools for adults and for children date back to 1826. . . . A goodly number of pupils (I am translating) read the Bible and the Testament perfectly well. Several are capable of taking the place of the Moravian Brothers, whether it be in their houses, in the evening schools, or Sunday schools."

"Our churches", continues M. Taylor, "each meant to hold 500 people, are now too small to contain everyone who comes because, in addition to the congregants, several attend our public services without being under our spiritual care."

"Every week we have a spiritual conference with the adults of both sexes; the minister with the men, the minister's wife with the women. For this conference the faithful come to see us, in the evening if they live nearby and, if they live far away, during Sunday morning or evening."

"In case of illness we visit them, if they so request, but with the consent of the landowner or manager. In case of death, we bury them in the common cemetery. If some quarrel separates them, or if they commit some act contrary to the precepts of religion, we apply ourselves to the task of reconciling them or we admonish them. If they resist our admonitions or if they do not reform their conduct, following the rules of our faith and according to the circumstances, they are suspended or excluded from the church. We have been able to ascertain that this kind of religious discipline has been followed by a sincere conversion in all cases where a solemn readmission is warranted, in the presence of the congregation, etc."

9. The Army and the Militia

As Commander-in-Chief of the Windward Islands, the Governor has under his command ten regiments: the Royal Regiment, the 19th, 25th, 36th, 65th, 67th, 69th, 76th, the 86th Foot Grenadiers, and finally the first West Indian. These forces are distributed in various islands, of which Barbados is the headquarters. On the occasion of my visit, three regiments and a strong detachment of artillery were occupying the handsome barracks at Bridgetown. In evaluating the military forces of the English colonies, one must not lose sight of the contribution of the naval forces and the ease with which they provide rapid transportation of a great number of men to a danger point.

The Governor is also Commander-in-Chief of all of the island militia, which comprises 11 regiments (the number of the parishes). From my observation, I believe that the Barbados militia is, in many respects, even better organized from a military point of view than that in the other English colonies. I have not been able to obtain the exact size of the militia, but one can estimate it approximately by the number of its officers, which is about 300.²³

10. Police

A recent act of the legislature has provided for the reorganization of the police. The police forces are divided over six districts which correspond to the six districts of the special magistrature.²⁴ The police personnel are composed of one superintendent, six bailiffs, and 114 employees, of which 84 are mounted and only 84 serve on foot.²⁵ These forces are distributed within the districts in proportion to their population size.

11. Jails and Prisons

Because the hurricane of 1832 destroyed the buildings which housed the jail and the house of correction, these have been temporarily transferred to the Town Hall.²⁶ This temporary situation has been an obstacle to the creation here of the improvements brought about in similar institutions on the other islands; as a result, the common jail has been combined with the house of correction. The nature of the buildings has not allowed the recognition of the different classifications among prisoners which have been established elsewhere; the buildings cannot even house more than 200

prisoners. There are found, of course, the treadmill, the workshop for the breaking of rocks, and other devices for punishment; but there is neither a hospital nor a surgeon. Bibles are distributed to the prisoners, but no chaplain is assigned to them.

Here is the population of the prison at the time of my stay on the island. I take this from a document which the Attorney General obtained for me. The number of prisoners was 782 men and 423 women; total, 1,205. This figure breaks down as follows:

	<i>Men</i> ²⁷	<i>Women</i>
For debts	54	17
For misdemeanors	559	368
For felonies	129	38
Total	1,205	
Prisoners tried	732	393
Prisoners not tried	50	30
Total	1,205	
Of this number:		
Sick at the same time	5	
Deaths	7	

12. The Press and Newspapers

As is the case in all English possessions, the press of Barbados is completely free; 4 newspapers serve as organs for the most divergent opinions.²⁸

In the polemic which arose on the question of the abolition of slavery, I did not find that enough consideration was given to the diversity in the institutions which govern the English and French colonies, nor to their influence in preparation for emancipation. There seems to be ignorance of the fact that the English have transported to the lands they have subjugated their mores and all the customs of freedom from the mother country, and that, except for slaves, the colonial city does not differ in any way from the

city of the mother country. They forget that elsewhere colonial regimes did not seem to be able to work except when they were sheltered from all criticism and from all inspection. But opinions very opposed to slavery circulated freely in the English colonies; thus Wilberforce had there his own tribune, so to speak, and philanthropy proclaimed its doctrines there in the very midst of the interests which it was threatening.

Understandably, the state of the press at the very least had the effect of accustoming the slave to the idea that his fate was going to change without his own assistance; also, it did tend to turn aside the dangers of the transition and caused the transformation of labor to be effected in a peaceful way.

On the other hand, in England more so than elsewhere, the Society of Abolitionists weighed the enormity of its task. It did not limit itself to the display of principles that no one contests nor to the feelings shared by everyone. It did not pretend to be ignorant of the fact that, before calling an unhappy people to the advantages of social life, it had to enlighten them about rights badly understood and duties even more badly comprehended. It did not neglect any of the means which could hasten bringing about their higher state of civilization. It sought out the assistance of the other philanthropic associations, encouraged the zeal of the religious sects, which furnished it with apostles and, if need be, martyrs; it founded schools and distributed in profusion Bibles and elementary treatises most cleverly adapted to the mentality of the Black population.

Such has been the state of things in the English Antilles for the last 30 years. If so many sacrifices and efforts, and so much perseverance, have only produced results so incomplete as to leave the future of emancipation in doubt in these fine colonies, what is one to think of the French colonies, where nothing, I repeat nothing, has yet been done to prepare the slave population for a life in society?

Conclusion

Barbados is much less advanced than Antigua from the point of view of the civilized state of its worker population; considering its topography and land distribution, however, it combines to the highest degree conditions which can provide the opportunity for the continuity of labor productivity.

As I have said, no parcel of land is without an owner. I emphasize this circumstance because its consequences seem fairly decisive to me, and because the future of labor and of large scale farming seems to depend on it to a great degree. It is conceivable, in fact, that, for lack of unowned land and being unable to procure for himself his own home and land, the newly freed slave would resign himself to working for others. However, is it as easily conceivable that, in those colonies which in 1840 will be in the opposite circumstances — and confronted with fertile and unowned land — the attraction of a new independent kind of life would not become for the newly freed slave more powerful than the attraction of being in the hire of another; also that the natural distaste of his past way of life would allow him to accurately distinguish the difference between voluntary paid labor and gratuitous and forced labor?

One must not be deceived by the situation; his past life in labor has compromised his future. He must be rehabilitated, but that can only be achieved by means of a fairly long trial period. It is time alone that can instill and develop in the Black population the feeling for and understanding of property, the desire for and customs of civilized life, and substitute, as a final result, the motivation to labor because of his own needs rather than because of the threat of punishment.

These considerations, which I am only pointing out, are of such seriousness in my eyes that if Jamaica, which has approximately 2,000,000 acres of unowned fertile land, does not hasten to take (in the short space of time remaining in the Apprenticeship) the necessary steps to end this state of things, it is to be feared that labor and agriculture will undergo the same fate as on Saint Domingo. From that point of view, Barbados is in the most favorable circumstances.

The same is not true as regards the moral development of the Black population. However, the impetus is given and the government is busying itself with organizing elementary and religious education on a broader scale; funds have been voted and more priests and teachers were expected daily from the mother country. They have also attended to the most appropriate means of developing in the very bosom of this population an understanding and taste for culture, and the feeling and need for property. During my stay in Bridgetown I attended a meeting called by one of the most eminent residents of the colony; this meeting was presided over by the Governor and assisted by the Bishop. It was a question of the

establishment of a savings bank for the emancipated class, and its nature was decided upon in an important meeting where a great number of Black apprentices were present.

It has been shown, by the conditions mentioned earlier, that the population was increasing and that the disproportion between the size of the working class and agricultural needs was daily becoming more noticeable. This situation, which was a source of wealth in the past, is becoming a disadvantage for the future which must be given serious consideration; for what shall be done with the excess population? Will they be left to the care of their former planters, whose property they no longer are, or will they be sent off to the other colonies where the laboring class is insufficient? I have reason to believe that the government is considering the adoption of this latter approach. In that case it will be deplorable for humanity and for civilization to have been able to offer to a part of the population the advantage of freedom, but only at the cost of their customs, their present well-being, and of a painful expatriation.

Yours truly,

(Signed) A. Bernard

NOTES

1. We have been unable to ascertain Bernard's first name or learn any biographical details about him with the library resources at our disposal.
2. Woodville K. Marshall, ed., *The Colthurst Journal: Journal of a Special Magistrate in the Islands of Barbados and St. Vincent, July 1835 - September 1838* (New York: KTO Press, 1977), p. 130. In his journal entries between August and December 1837, Colthurst briefly and approvingly describes the information gathering procedures "of these French visitors" (*ibid.*, pp. 129-130).
3. David L. Gobert and Jerome S. Handler, eds., "Barbados in the Post-Apprenticeship Period: The Observations of a French Naval Officer." *JBMHS* xxxv [1978] 243-266; xxxvi [1979] 4-15.
4. These reports were originally published in volume 4 of a five volume series dealing with abolition of slavery and the termination of Apprenticeship in the British colonies: *Abolition de l'Esclavage dans les Colonies Anglaises (quatrième publication). Rapports Recueillis par le Département*

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ment de la Marine et des Colonies (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1841).

This series and each of its volumes is described in Gobert and Handler, *JBMHS* xxxv [1978] 259-261; Bernard's report on Barbados appears on pp. 93-119.

5. *Abolition de l'Esclavage*, p. 1. Bernard's reports on Antigua and Jamaica, also dated April 1836, are on pp. 162-187 and pp. 1-66, respectively, in this volume.
6. Speaking of the French investigatory teams in general, Chatillon notes their "inquiries . . . were made during teams of a few weeks in the various colonies Inquiries were never made of the former slaves themselves (which is not surprising considering the period)." ("Les Premières Années de la Suppression de l'Esclavage (1834-1840) dans les Colonies Anglaises – d'Après les Rapports des Enquêteurs Royaux Français," in *Le Passage de la Société Esclavagiste à la Société Post-Esclavagiste aux Antilles au XIX Siècle*, Colloque d'Histoire Antillaise, Tome 1, Point-A-Pitre, Guadeloupe 1969, p. 25). Although Chatillon is critical of the ostensible objectivity of the various French observers, his article is entirely based on the published reports and offers no substantive information aside from what is contained in the reports themselves.
7. See, for example, Marshall, *Colthurst Journal*, pp. 43-145; and sources cited in Jerome S. Handler, *Guide to Source Materials for the Study of Barbados History, 1627-1834* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1971).
8. Gobert and Handler, *JBMHS* xxxv [1978] 245.
9. In 1834 there were 399 plantations with sugar works as well as many more smaller plantations without them (see Jerome S. Handler and Frederick W. Lange, *Plantation Slavery in Barbados: An Archaeological and Historical Investigation* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978], pp. 13, 37-38).
10. We have not been able to identify the plantation or its owner.
11. The plantation is undoubtedly Vaucuse, which, at the time of Bernard's visit, was one of Barbados's largest; in 1833 it had 308 slaves and about 600 acres. Its owner was Henry Peter Simmons who was born on May 17, 1776, and started owning property in Barbados around 1802 or 1803. We are unsure when he acquired Vaucuse, but an advertisement in the *Barbados Mercury* (February 3, 1816) mentions the "estate of Henry P. Simmons called Vaucuse, formerly Yorkshire Hall." Simmons served in the House of Assembly, at least during the sessions of 1811-12 and 1813-14, representing Saint Philip, and in October 1834 was named in the Commission of the Peace. He frequently resided in England, however, and in the early 1830s he published three pamphlets in that country which argued against emancipation and which well reflect the views of many members of the Barbadian plantocracy on that subject. He died at

Vaucluse on February 19, 1845, and his tomb, with the inscription of his birth and death dates, is still located at the plantation, not far from the yard. For materials on Simmons, see various items in the *JBMHS*: 1, 26; iv, 148; xi, 10; xvii, 19, 20; xviii, 52. See also Handler, *Guide*, pp. 86, 88, 90; and Thomas Rolph, *A Brief Account, Together with Observations, Made During a Visit in the West Indies . . .* (Dundas, Upper Canada, 1836).

Mr. H. was George Hewitt, a large landowner in St. Thomas and St. George. He leased Vaucluse from H.P. Simmons in 1835.

12. Other total figures for 1829, also based on official returns, are 102,007 (Jerome S. Handler, *The Unappropriated People: Freedmen in the Slave Society of Barbados* [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974], pp. 18-19).
13. In 1834, Barbados's population was 103,983, including 82,807 slaves, 6,584 free colored, and 14, 592 whites (Handler, *Unappropriated People*, pp. 18-19).
14. Here Bernard refers to two long tables, appended at the end of his report (pp. 118-119), which list the numbers of slaves, by sex and parish, major occupational categories, and by parish and age cohorts. These tables, derived from the returns on slaves for whom compensation was awarded, were published in the *Barbadian* newspaper (August 13, 1835) and are reprinted in Marshall, *Coltburst Journal*, p. 237; for this reason we omit the tables.
15. Actually, the Council was composed of 12 members. The Lord Bishop held his seat ex officio; in the case of the death, removal from office, or resignation of the Council President, he was succeeded by the oldest member of the Council (Robert Schomburgk, *The History of Barbados* [London, 1848], p. 206).
16. This evidence helps date the time of Bernard's visit. In June 1834, six stipendiary magistrates were allocated to Barbados and six judicial divisions were created; in November 1835, however, the number of magistrates was increased to seven as a seventh district was created by separating Bridgetown from Saint Michael (Marshall, *Coltburst Journal*, p. 239). Bernard thus visited Barbados prior to November 1835 (see also notes 22 and 24). For the best available account of the role and function of the Special Magistrates, see Marshall's introduction in the *Coltburst Journal*, pp. 8-34.
17. Bernard presents a long table listing the 17 territories in the Diocese of Barbados; the same table is published in Schomburgk (*History*, p. 99) and for this reason is omitted here.
18. That is, William Hart Coleridge. Bishop Coleridge arrived at Barbados in early 1825 and headed the Diocese of Barbados until his retirement

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- in 1842. For the growth in the number of schools after his arrival and until the end of slavery, see Handler, *Unappropriated People*, pp. 176 ff.
19. Plantation schools for slaves did not exist to any significant degree until the late 1820s; by 1833, approximately 50 plantations conducted daily schools, many of which taught reading (Handler, *Unappropriated People*, pp. 183-186).
 20. Bernard is here referring to the 1823 destruction of the Methodist chapel in Bridgetown by a white mob.
 21. In Barbados in 1831, for example, the Moravians claimed 915 slave converts (i.e., "all who are known to enjoy the instruction of the missionaries, whether communicants, baptized, or catechumens"), while during the same year in Antigua there were 15,087 converts (United Brethren, *Periodical Accounts Relating to the Missions . . . Established Among the Heathen* [London, 1831], vol. 12, pp. xiv-xv).
 22. The foundation stone for the church on Roebuck street was laid in November 1834, and in a letter dated February 12, 1835, the missionary John Taylor wrote that it was nearing completion and "we hope to finish all in a few weeks" (United Brethren, *Periodical Accounts* [1834], vol. 13, pp. 248, 291), suggesting a completion date sometime in February or March 1835. Schomburgk, however, writes that the chapel was "finished in May 1835" (*History*, p. 248). Whatever the actual month of completion, this information places Bernard's arrival at sometime toward the middle of 1835 (see also notes 16 and 24).
By contrast with the Methodists, the progress of the Moravians was much greater. In 1829-30, for examples, 620 of their 628 congregants were slaves; in 1833, all of the 981 congregants were slaves. In 1829-30, the Methodists had 129 members, of whom 32 were slaves (Handler, *Unappropriated People*, pp. 155, 157).
 23. In the middle of 1833, there were 4,255 men on the militia rolls, but the effective fighting force, comprised of men who were armed, accoutred, and in good health, was limited to 2,560 (Handler, *Unappropriated People*, p.115).
 24. Although an act establishing a rural police force had passed the legislature in 1834, it was ultimately disallowed by the Crown; not until mid-April 1835 did the legislature pass a revised "Act for the temporary establishment of a rural police" to which the governor assented in the same month. In August 1835, "An act for continuing in force and amending" the April police bill passed the legislature (Marshall, *Colthurst Journal*, pp. 13, 55, 59; Schomburgk, *History*, pp. 463, 465-66, 468). Bernard is clearly referring to one or both of these acts, and this passage helps date his visit to sometime after April or August 1835 and before November 1835 (see also notes 16 and 22).

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25. There is an apparent printing error here; the number of mounted and foot police totals 168, rather than 114.
26. The hurricane, one of the most devastating in Barbados's history, actually occurred on August 11, 1831. For more details on the island's prison system during the Apprenticeship period, see J.W. Pringle, "Report . . . on Prisons in the West Indies, Part II," *Parliamentary Papers*, 1838, vol. 3, rept. 270, pp. 3-19.
27. There seems to be a printing error in the figures for males; the total for the three categories of offences should be 782, rather than the 742 indicated.
28. Presumably the newspapers were the *Barbadian*, *Barbados Globe*, *Barbados Mercury*, and the *West Indian* (Handler, *Guide*, pp. 116-118).