

THE JOURNAL
OF THE
BARBADOS MUSEUM AND
HISTORICAL SOCIETY



VOLUME XXXV

NO.4

1978

BARBADOS IN THE POST- APPRENTICESHIP PERIOD THE OBSERVATIONS OF A FRENCH NAVAL OFFICER — 1

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY
DAVID L. GOBERT AND JEROME S. HANDLER

INTRODUCTION

Slavery legally ended in the British Empire on August 1, 1834, but at this date the institution still existed in France's sugar colonies. During the 1830s, however, growing emancipation pressures in France resulted in various ameliorative measures in the legal status of slaves. By 1840, the French government had decided for emancipation, and in that year a royal commission was appointed to study the mechanics of abolishing slavery and the possible socioeconomic consequences of emancipation in the colonies themselves. The commission members held a diversity of views, but there was a general consensus that information was needed in order to formulate recommendations to the government. As part of its efforts to acquire information, the commission decided to investigate the results of emancipation in the British West Indies. A five man group was selected to carry out these investigations; the group was headed by *Capitaine de Corvette* Layrle, a career naval officer.¹

As a whole, the group visited most of Britain's Caribbean possessions, but apparently not all members of the group visited each of the territories; Layrle, however, visited quite a few, including Barbados. It is his report on Barbados, based on a visit during the early 1840s, that is translated in this article.²

Victor Schoelcher, the leading French emancipationist of his day, objected to the members of this investigatory team, and questioned if they would be biased by their backgrounds and vested interests. The group included slaveowners and "creoles of

the old guard", as well as the author of a publication which had argued "against freedom for the blacks". Schoelcher, however, had met Layrle on an earlier visit to the Caribbean and believed that he "had an open mind on the question of abolition". Schoelcher changed his impressions after becoming acquainted with the reports of the investigatory team. In his own account of a tour of the Caribbean, Schoelcher often referred to Layrle's report in particular, and gave "contradictory evidence and conclusions from his own experience in Jamaica and Antigua, the only two islands covered by both travellers"; Schoelcher became convinced that the "creole planters who certainly dominated the investigatory group . . . [had] apparently succeeded in persuading the initially open mind of Layrle".³

In reading Layrle's account of Barbados, one can agree that Schoelcher's suspicions about his "open mind" were warranted. In our opinion, Layrle's observations on Barbadian society, particularly those relating to the behavior and values of the working class population, must be read with caution. Layrle perceived himself as a dispassionate and objective observer, but his account reflects considerable class biases and ethnocentricity. To whatever extent his perceptions were tinted by his own class background and preconceptions (or even, perhaps, his faulty comprehension of the English language), they were probably further informed by the apparently very selective group in Barbados from which he gathered much of his information. His personal attentions seem to have focused on high administrative officials and, in his words, "the island's most prominent inhabitants". It is doubtful that he communicated directly with the newly freed apprentices, whose behavior, values, and life style, are major interests in his report; moreover, it is unlikely that he passed much, if any, time with others who were less than sympathetic to the views and interests of the plantocracy. One wonders, for example, how Layrle's perceptions of Barbados might have been affected had he tried to understand local conditions from the point of view of the freed apprentices, or had he gathered information from a person such as Samuel Jackman Prescod who, during the time of Layrle's visit, was not only editor of *The Liberal*, but also a leading spokesman for the non-white group and a founding member of the Barbados Auxiliary of the British Anti-Slavery Society.

However Layrle's political views and prepossessions affected his perceptions of Barbadian society, the Barbados to which he

came had recently emerged from the Apprenticeship period, and the slave experience was still a factor which profoundly influenced the nature of the society and the relationships between its constituent elements; Barbados was in the midst of an important transition and significant changes were taking place in its social structure. Although we do not maintain that Layrle's observations offer important insights into Barbados at this time, his account is of some historical interest; we have translated it not only for the general readership of this journal, but also for more specialized researchers who are concerned with this important period in British West Indian history.

Layrle's account is translated in its entirety; we have placed each of his original footnotes in parentheses in the text and have marked them with asterisks.

In editing Layrle's account we have tried to resist the temptation of providing detailed explanatory notes because the account itself is already sufficiently lengthy for publication in this journal and extensive notes would only increase the length of this article beyond reasonable proportions. Thus, in compiling our notes, we have generally attempted to identify individuals named or alluded to in the account and to clarify substantive ambiguities and ambiguities raised by the translation process. Occasionally, we have indicated alternative views on observations made by Layrle; we have also selectively elaborated on some of the socioeconomic issues that Layrle treats, as well as provided references to primary and secondary sources which yield additional materials on these or related issues.

**Report made to the Rear Admiral commanding
the French Naval Station of the Antilles,
by M. Layrle, Sloop Captain commanding the Brig *Le Hussard***

June 1, 1841

Admiral:

The beautiful and interesting colony of Barbados is the outpost of the English settlements in the West Indian archipelago. This island is remarkable in the size of its population, which exceeds 100,000 souls, in the extent and richness of its agriculture, and in the shipping and commercial activities which are centered there. It is through Barbados that goods of English manufacture flow to the part of the former Spanish Main which neighbors the Wind-

ward Islands. In this part of the archipelago, Barbados plays the role that Jamaica plays with respect to the Gulf of Mexico, the Bay of Honduras, and the Isthmus of Panama.

If the commercial prosperity of Barbados attracted my attention, it only distracted me for a moment from the objective of my stay in this colony. For the last fifteen months I have been conducting investigations about the English islands with the goal of observing the procession of events given birth to by the emancipation of the blacks. After having had to describe the various aspects which free labor shows according to the nature of the different places and the extent of their populations, after recently having had to explain myself about Antigua, and to show the superiority of that colony over others which I had seen up to then, I was anxious to arrive at Barbados which I only knew about through information that had come to me from others.

All that I had been told about this colony was favorable to the idea of emancipation or, to be more precise, favorable to the way in which labor has been maintained and cultivation continued. One must say that labor and cultivation dominate the entire question of emancipation, their maintenance being the decisive point and the most difficult goal to attain after the end of slavery. But if in going to Barbados I had a favorable opinion about the state of affairs, my prejudices were not of such a nature to conceal the truth from me. And I have looked for that truth. In Barbados, as elsewhere, I went beyond the external appearances which mislead a foreigner and which can so easily deceive him. I have wanted to understand the condition of people and things before forming my conclusions. My inquiries and researches were favored by the kind cooperation and candor of the authorities and the island's most prominent inhabitants.

Barbados is a country where there is nothing to be concealed from the investigative eye of the foreigner: everything there is satisfactory and of such a nature to satisfy English pride. Therefore, there is no deceit to fear because there is no reason to have recourse to deceptions.

1. Topography and Population

As I said in a preceding report, all is well in Antigua. Today, I would say that Barbados is superior to Antigua. There are some similarities between these two colonies. In both there are frequent droughts, and the very extensive ownership of the land

militates in favor of work; but since Barbados contains a greater population than Antigua, Barbados has opportunities for work and has been able to maintain wages at a suitable level; this places it in a favorable and exceptional position.

Barbados is 22 miles long and 14 miles wide. It covers 106,470 acres of land.

Barbados has 500 souls per square mile. This island is the most populated of the British West Indies. In proportion to its area, it has more inhabitants than Belgium and China which, with its 350 million souls, only has 288 persons per square mile. At the sight of Barbados, before having landed on the island, one gets an idea of its dense population by seeing the number of dwellings, of cabins, and of all kinds of houses which are visible at a distance because of the land's slight elevation.

Barbados is a generally flat land which presents an aspect of considerable cultivation. In the northeast, there is a section called Scotland, whose terrain differs from other parts of the island but whose highest point is no more than 1,100 feet above sea level.

There exists something in Barbados that one does not find in any other English colony. This is a class which is intermediate between the English planters and the colored people; it is a population peculiar to the island. Those who comprise this class are known by the denomination of *Barbadians*. They are descendants of Europeans who settled the island in earliest times, but they only have an imperfect knowledge of the period when their ancestors settled the colony. Barbados is their homeland; they do not have to grieve, as do the other planters, for the things of their childhood. In Barbados they are in the land of their birth and in the midst of their friends. They do not labor with the aim of carrying elsewhere the riches that flow to them from that labor; what they gain serves to improve their position and to increase their fortune and luxury on the island itself.⁴

To the physical circumstances which are favorable to the island, Barbados adds a rich and settled population whose ambition is linked to the well-being of the country and to the happiness of the community. To the contrary, each year the other colonies see their riches pass into the hands of strangers to their soil. These riches get buried in Europe and are devoured by luxurious living; absolutely nothing comes back to the country for the well-being of the community.

At the time of Emancipation, Barbados counted 82,807 slaves; the average value of each was estimated at 47 pounds sterling

(1,175 francs). It was estimated then that the free population was 14,959 whites, 3,119 men of color, and 2,027 blacks. This made up a total of 102,912 individuals. Except for the number of slaves, I could not verify the accuracy of these figures.⁵ The most knowledgeable people in Barbados maintain that the island's population is not less than 130,000 souls, but, as in all the English colonies, there is not one document upon which one can rely.

Since Emancipation, the proximity of Trinidad and British Guiana has harmed Barbados somewhat by the emigration of a certain number of freedmen. Because the law restricting emigration, passed by the local legislature, did not receive the approval of the British government, it has been legal for blacks to leave their homeland and to go elsewhere to work.⁶ At first glance this work seems better remunerated in Trinidad and Demerara than in Barbados, but it is not when compared to the higher cost of living in those two places. The infatuation with emigration, therefore, soon gave way to a more realistic appraisal of the situation.

The climate of Trinidad and Demerara does not suit the blacks of the other colonies; a good number of them have succumbed under the influence of the low lying and humid land, which contrasts particularly with Barbados where everything is affected by dryness. If it is not possible for me to provide a figure for the losses in Barbados that have resulted from emigration,⁷ I can at least affirm that this state of things has ceased. Moreover, the black has this remarkable characteristic: in leaving the land of his birth, his parents, and his friends, he keeps alive the thought of returning and he does this as soon as circumstances permit. This thought of returning diminishes his desire to visit new places.

Since Emancipation, Barbados has also seen a decrease in the number of rural workers. Many freedmen have left the fields to be employed elsewhere; this is a fact which is verified by the population increase in the towns. However, losses from emigration, those which result from the blacks who have abandoned rural work, and, finally, those losses which result from the undependability of the blacks remaining in the fields have by no means weakened the agricultural system. In Barbados today there is more land under cultivation than there was under slavery. If the workers are not as numerous, the better organization of labor permits the present work force to produce as much as in former times.

Because of the large population of Barbados, the planters are assured of help at all times. I did not find a plantation manager

or owner who did not give me assurance on this point. It is a singular advantage of this colony to have as many laborers as can be employed and to be sure of finding them for any kind of work.

If the large population of Barbados lends itself to this state of affairs, there is still another circumstance which is no less favorable to the colony: it is the extensive ownership of land which does not leave any possibility for the black to establish himself on his own account elsewhere, that is, other than the land which belongs to him. Barbados has neither unclaimed land nor woods; it is a large garden divided among a certain number of landowners. The black who does not want to work for others must remain on his own land or, if he does not possess any, he will be prosecuted as a vagabond. Police action is easy in a land where the absence of hiding places makes flight the only escape.

Being obliged to possess land or to work for others, some blacks buy land while others rent it. They devote themselves to the cultivation of food crops and sometimes sugar cane. But in Barbados climatic conditions make the cultivation of food crops difficult, and the production of cane, planted on a small scale, is not sufficient to assure an independent existence. Although possessing or renting lands, freedmen are happy to offer their labor to the planters, and the remuneration they receive in exchange is, without doubt, the most secure portion of their total incomes.

2. Soil—Climate

Barbados's soil is good, productive, and perfectly suited to the cultivation of cane. This soil varies according to locality, sometimes it is light, sandy, or calcareous, and sometimes heavy, but the normal climatic conditions of Barbados and the resultant droughts, often destroy the most beautiful hopes and reduce even the best prepared crops to a very low yield.

In 1831, the colony experienced a terrible hurricane which caused considerable losses and of which one can still find traces. This disastrous hurricane had a singular effect, that is, in up-setting atmospheric conditions the harvests became more abundant. Thus, before 1831, the amount of produce varied from 16 to 25,000 hogsheads of sugar; since 1831 it has risen considerably and has reached between 30 and 32,000.

3. Production

State of the Produce of Barbados from 1835 to 1841

Years	Sugar hogsheads	Molasses puncheons	Rum
1835	19,900	-	-
1836	21,397	-	-
1837	31,284	7,197	-
1838	32,658	9,849	-
1839	28,029	7,579	-
1840	13,756	2,424	-
1841	17,000	2,550	-

If one judged Barbados by what takes place in most of the British colonies, one would be led to believe that, since the production of 1840 and 1841 was the result of free labor, the amount of work was very much less than during the Apprenticeship period when the blacks gave 45 hours per week to their former masters; but such is not the case. Cultivation has been at least as great in these later years as in former times and the harvests have been easily carried out and completed at the right time.

Labor, I repeat, has never been lacking. The continual droughts of 1840 and 1841 retarded the growth of the cane and it barely attained half of its normal size. Weather conditions, therefore, made all of the difference in the production of 1840 and 1841.^a

To judge the state of labor by the size of the crop, one must not limit oneself to the production of one or two years, especially in colonies like Barbados and Antigua which have exceptional climatic conditions. In order to arrive at the truth, one must compare a number of years and calculate an average figure. This is what I did in discussing Antigua, which has had seven years of free labor. However, since Barbados is only in its third cane harvest since Emancipation, or, to be more precise, its second (since the 1839 harvest was prepared under Apprenticeship), the scope of free labor in this colony can only be appraised on the spot by traveling through the fields and by listening to people who are knowledgeable about agricultural production. This is what I did in Barbados. By so doing, I arrived at a favorable opinion of labor in this colony where, except for droughts, every-

thing militates in favor of production: a sizeable population and the obligation that freedmen have to work for others. Therefore, the planters are right when they affirm that they never lack help no matter what kind of work has to be carried out.

In the table of production that I gave above, the figures for rum are not given; however, the island produces a rather large quantity. But the customs office has no accounts of rum because this liquor is consumed in the colony, especially since today the blacks have money and can satisfy their needs and their tastes.⁹

4. The Transition from Apprenticeship to Free Labour 10

Barbados passed through Apprenticeship without noticeable trouble and without too much conflict.¹¹ What seems to show this is the resistance of the legislative assembly whenever, by insinuation or otherwise, it was a question of shortening the period this transitional system was to be in effect. Thus, it was not until after the British Parliament's second reading of the bill modifying the abolition act, and not until the colonial legislature was convinced that it was necessary to bow to the wishes of the mother country, that the legislature decreed, on May 15, 1838, the abolition of apprenticeship effective the following August 1. By this act, rural apprentices were freed at the same time as those in the towns. In this, the Assembly yielded not only to the demands of the British government, but also to those of pressures from local sources. At the instigation of the governor, the Council declared itself in favor of simultaneous emancipation. The Bishop, and influential inhabitants under the influence of the clergy, had already freed the apprentices on the plantations which they controlled, and, finally, the general sentiment was such that the Assembly had to yield and bow to the change which was demanded.

In the legislative Assembly of Barbados, the current governor did not find the docility that he had encountered in Antigua four years earlier. Barbados had had the time to judge the hasty action of Antigua, and to discover that in rejecting the Apprenticeship period the proprietors of Antigua had made a sacrifice which was not warranted by either prudence or the uncertainties of the future. Sir Evan MacGregor, passing from the governorship of Antigua to that of Barbados, found in Barbados a state of affairs which was opposed to his ideas, but with his customary tact and prudence he knew how to yield to local conditions and to pre-

serve a good harmony between the Assembly and the Council. I will say further that the preceding administration had left some germs of discord which the governor had the good fortune to dispel, thanks to his foresight and the wisdom of his actions.¹³ Therefore, Barbados adds to the happy circumstances which inhere in its locality the advantage of having exchanged a discredited and weak administration for one of a talented man; he skillfully led the island through the dangers of emancipation and away from a legacy whose shortcomings it was necessary to repair.

In the midst of its prosperity, however, Barbados contained within itself many elements of discord: a sizeable population which was not acquainted with the duties of the new state into which it was called; imprudent friends who tended to lead it astray by wishing to move faster than conditions allowed; and, finally, a press which made a point of denigrating the acts of the authorities and of exciting passions and resentment by presenting these acts in an unfavorable light.

Sir Evan MacGregor came through this period of crisis, and did it with his characteristic talent. Today, minds are calmer and the blacks better understand their position. The press has remained as bad as ever, and as subversive of public order as before, but the discerning minds of freedmen are daily pointing out the true nature of the perfidious insinuations of the press.* [*The city of Bridgetown has seven newspapers: *The Morning News*, the *Globe*, the *West Indian*, the *Liberal*, the *Barbados Mercury*, the *Barbadian*, and the *Official Gazette*.¹⁴]

Sir Evan MacGregor told me: "You have censorship in your colonies; keep it, above all if you take the road toward emancipation". "But", I said to him, "Governor, once one has achieved a free government, I don't know if we can maintain censorship". "That would be a great misfortune", replied His Excellency. "If you stopped being master of the press, it would overrun your administration and would hasten the ruin of your colonies".¹⁵ I quote these words because they carry some weight, coming as they do from the mouth of a man like Sir Evan MacGregor who has had considerable experience in government and who is such a good judge of both men and things.

The Governor also told me: 'You have seen Antigua, Captain; it is at my request that the legislative assembly of that colony did not accept the apprenticeship system. Well, what do you think of that? Haven't things transpired in Antigua as acceptably as in the

other colonies? The transition period of apprenticeship, therefore, was not necessary". Before going to Barbados, I was completely of the opinion of Sir Evan; except I will repeat here what I have said elsewhere, that is, the Antiguan legislature was not acting in the best interests of property owners when it required former slaveowners to renounce the right of four to six years of service which was guaranteed them by the Abolition Act.

The point of view in Antigua which pressed for the rejection of apprenticeship aimed, as I noted in my earlier report, at getting compensations which the mother country did not grant, and above all wanted to avoid the influence of the stipendiary magistrates which England was interposing between planters and freedmen, and whose biases were not in doubt. But magistrates from the mother country installed themselves in Antigua in spite of the objections of the legislature. The magistrates had also taken possession of Barbados when Sir Evan MacGregor was called to the governorship of the Windward Islands. It was with regret, no doubt, that he found in his new position the difficulty which he had wanted to avoid in Antigua; and, here, the difficulty was even greater because the prevailing system required more frequent intervention by the magistrates, most of whom were hostile to the planters.

5. Stipendiary Magistrates—Courts of Arbitration and Reconciliation

The end of Apprenticeship was supposed to lead to the elimination of the stipendiary magistrates. The planters awaited this moment impatiently, but their hopes were not realized. The stipendiary magistrates were maintained by the British government and they are still functioning.

The continuation of a state of affairs which had given rise to so much distrust did not satisfy the colonies. Especially in Barbados, this practice was counter to the views of the governor whose background caused him to look unfavorably upon a special magistracy of which he had wanted to rid Antigua. But how to go about it? Supported on the one hand by the planters' dislike of the system, and on the other put off by the British government's mistrust of the planters, Sir Evan worked tirelessly to bring about the removal of the stipendiary magistrates. But he could only succeed by adopting an approach which could satisfy the demands of the two sides. It was in this state of affairs that His Excellency proposed

the creation of the Courts of Arbitration and Reconciliation.

Each parish of the colony was to have its court. A local magistrate, paid from public funds, was designated to preside over it; the court was to be composed of five jurors chosen from among the freedmen of the parish, between the ages of 21 and 60 years, who would demonstrate acceptable safeguards by their behavior and their morality.

The result of this was to destroy the stipendiary magistrates and to reestablish what England had wanted to avoid: the intervention of colonials in cases between former masters and freedmen. Despite the corrective of black jurymen, this was the disadvantage of the new system. To remedy this situation, the governor thought it was necessary to give satisfaction to the stipendiary magistrates, and win their support of his views. Therefore, he made the decisions of the Courts of Arbitration and Reconciliation subject to appeal, and created a secondary court of appeal* (**an assistant court of appeal*) which was composed of three of the former stipendiary magistrates.¹⁷

This approach satisfactorily balanced the interests of one group against the touchiness of the other, and served as a vehicle for the governor's scheme. By this new system, the colony got rid of five of the stipendiary magistrates, out of the eight which had been imposed upon it, and the functions of the remaining magistrates no longer resembled what they were before. Sir Evan MacGregor found in the Council and in the House of Assembly an agreement which facilitated the task he had given himself.

The Courts of Arbitration and Reconciliation were the object of a long and detailed correspondence between the Governor and the Colonial Secretary in London. The metropolitan power was too infatuated with the magistrates which it had sent, and still mistrusted the planters too much, to agree unhesitatingly to an arrangement which thwarted its own devices and destroyed the safeguards which it had reserved to itself. However, the entreaties of the governor were so urgent, his arguments against the stipendiary magistrates so conclusive, and the opinion of the populace was so in agreement with that of the legislature, that the British government gave in. On the first of January, 1840, the legislature therefore unanimously passed an act which instituted in each parish of the island a Court of Arbitration and Reconciliation.

This tribunal is presided over by the magistrate in charge of the parish police. He is assisted by five jurymen whom he chooses from a list of seven. These seven jurymen are taken from an alphabeti-

cally arranged list of the parish's rural workers who, by their previous good behavior, are judged deserving of serving on the jury.

The objective of the court is to settle, within certain limits, the disputes that arise between freemen, and to judge the offenses they may commit. The jurors hear the charge and the defense, make a decision on the case by a majority vote, and determine the amount of the fine to be paid. If the parties in the case are satisfied, the judgment is final; if they are not satisfied, they can take their case to the Court of Appeal which, as I noted above, is composed of three former stipendiary magistrates.

Article 8 of the law constituting the Courts of Arbitration and Reconciliation is thus conceived: "Courts of Arbitration and Reconciliation will judge civil affairs, cases of indebtedness and property claims, when the value of the object being disputed does not exceed five pounds currency (60 francs), and when the damage to be paid does not exceed 40 shillings (25 francs). They will also be concerned with all cases which, not being within the jurisdiction of the Justices of the Peace and of the ordinary courts, nevertheless require reparation. In the latter cases, it will be permissible for the magistrates who preside over the Courts of Arbitration and Reconciliation to admit or reject the complaint, according to whether they consider it well or ill founded; but it is understood that the damage which can result from the verdict in cases of this kind cannot exceed, in any case, 40 shillings in local currency (25 francs)".¹⁹

The Courts of Arbitration and Reconciliation also have the purpose of sparing rural workers the expense that they would incur if they took their cases to a higher court. The courts give to the blacks a higher position in the social scale, a position which flatters their self esteem. Those among the blacks who are not called upon to be included in the jury lists find, in the courts in question, the guarantee of being judged by their peers.

In traveling through the countryside of Barbados and in visiting different police stations, I have had the opportunity to see the magistrates presiding and the juries functioning. I have been present at the examination of cases, and have heard these new courts pronounce their sentences: everything seemed proper to me. It was the first time that I saw such an institution in the English colonies; this advancement could not escape my notice.

During my stay in Jamaica last year, there was a question of establishing in that colony Courts of Reconciliation. There, as in

Barbados, the first order of business was to reject the stipendiary magistrates, but these courts were to be composed of three magistrates paid by the Colony, and the courts were not destined to benefit from the advantage of a jury. Without knowing what has become of this project, I am convinced that Sir Charles Metcalfe has neglected nothing in order to reestablish order in the countryside and trust between freedmen and planters.

In the single interview that the poor health of the governor of Barbados permitted me to have with him,²⁰ I had to take advantage of the few moments which were accorded me. Sir Evan MacGregor, with his customary kindness and clarity, hastened to give me the information about the Colony that I needed. Without having met them until then, the kind and enlightened intervention of his two secretaries* [*Messrs. Bedingfeld and Garaway²¹] apprised His Excellency of the aspects of his administration which had most particularly attracted my attention. Our conversation, therefore, was easy and flowing. The creation of the Courts of Arbitration and Reconciliation was not forgotten. On this subject Sir Evan told me: "In the belief that the removal of the stipendiary magistrates was necessary for the well being of the colony, concerned as I was about the way to replace them without alienating the planters' trust, and without straying too far from the views of the government, chance came to my aid. One day I happened to be reading the travels of Capall Brooke in Norway, and it was in reading what follows that I conceived of the idea of giving the rural laborers in Barbados the benefit of the courts in question: 'In Norway there are Courts of Reconciliation presided over by sheriffs or by their delegates. These courts have the purpose of intervening in all kinds of disputes; all civil actions are also in their jurisdiction. Civil actions can be judged only by the higher court after having been tried before the Courts of Reconciliation. The sheriff is assisted by a jury composed of the most respectable peasants of the locality. The jurors examine the case, hear the charge and the defense, and give their opinion accordingly. This manner of operation has the result that out of ten cases submitted to the court, nine are settled without the participation of the higher court, which spares considerable expense to the interested parties. If the parties abide by the decision of the jury, the case is considered settled; if they are not satisfied, they can appeal it to another jurisdiction. The Courts of Reconciliation do not require any expense. Their creation is of recent date: they were instituted under the reign of Christian VII. Incalculable good has derived from these tribunals'" .²²

I have in front of me the correspondence of the parochial magistrates concerning the Courts of Arbitration and Reconciliation. These functionaries are unanimous on the advantages provided by this new system. However, since experience has taught me that there are no documents more besmirched with error than official correspondence relating to the abolition of slavery, I do not give to the assertions of the magistrates more importance than they deserve. Therefore, I have been wary of that source. It was after having heard the planters and after having questioned persons outside the new magistracy (and not in authority), that I have arrived at a favorable opinion of the courts which settle the disputes of the rural populace.

6. Police

In leaving the subject of the Courts of Arbitration and Reconciliation, I must of necessity look briefly at the state of society in Barbados. The freed population is considerable; I have already said as much. Without having engaged in serious disturbances, its restlessness has given rise to an uneasiness which has provoked the legislature to establish measures which can suppress public disturbances as well as maintain security.

At the time of emancipation, the blacks were unsettled; work was abandoned in some parishes while in others it was more or less adversely affected.²³ However, this state of affairs did not last. The advice of the clergy triumphed over the freedmen's reluctance to work, and the firm attitude of the authorities and of the legislature left them nowhere the possibility of vagabonage or of flight; the blacks had, therefore, no other alternative but to return to their former masters.

It should be noted that the freedmen did not commit any reprehensible acts against the planters. If there were riots or if fires occurred, all these offenses only had the object of satisfying their own desire for vengeance. The colonists remained outside of the reach of their ill-will.

But a numerous population and the turbulence which it had shown in some areas was to attract the attention of the authorities. In order to give the society the guarantee of order and calm so necessary for its wellbeing, there was created an active and strong police force which covers the colony with its network. In Barbados, it is impossible for a serious event to take place in one parish without the authorities being informed of it instantly by the colony's numerous telegraphs, and without the police

promptly deploying their forces to the area of the disorder.

The police of Barbados are composed of 150 men on foot and 100 men on horse. It is a gathering of the elite, but without color distinctions. The foot police see to the tranquility of the towns and the mounted police take care of the countryside. The foot police are armed with carbines and sabers; the mounted ones have, in addition, a pair of pistols. Under ordinary circumstances in the towns, the foot police are armed with staffs; at night they exchange the staff for a sword and an alarm rattle.

The mounted police live in the country where they are divided among five stations. These stations have extensive premises: they serve as jails for the convicts of the parish, they provide lodgings for 20 men and their horses, and, finally, the parochial magistrate holds his Court of Arbitration and Reconciliation at the station.

The Bridgetown jail and the police stations are remarkable places and very well maintained. It is understandable that on flat terrain such as that of Barbados, with its numerous and well maintained roads, police action is easy and efficient. Nowhere in the English colonies have I seen a police force like the one in Barbados; in France we can only compare it to the *gendarmerie*; however, the Barbados police is superior in details of neatness and orderliness to what we have.

It is true that in Barbados the countryside is calm; the city of Bridgetown, however, does not always escape attempts at disorder and theft* [*During my stay at Barbados, a considerable number of thefts of jewelry and gold plate were committed. I owe it to the truth to say that the black recognized as the author of the thefts was not a recently liberated freedman. There is hardly a day when the press does not call the public's attention to some new theft or to some arson attempt. Arson is very much in vogue at Bridgetown] despite the efforts of an active police force. But what would it be like if this colony had only the means which are found elsewhere to assure its tranquility? The countryside would be on fire and the towns pillaged.

The police correct many evils, but their maintenance is a heavy cost for the colony to bear: in 1840, the police cost 34,732 pounds sterling (868,300 francs). It is hardly possible to let oneself entertain the false hope of a reduction in this expenditure. As long as the rural population of Barbados is so large and as long as the towns are the receptacles of the idle who flee from work in the fields, it will be necessary for the colony to pay dearly for its tranquility. The police in Barbados are like all the institutions in

this fine colony; they are well organized and strong, and their services are efficient and prompt. But the existence of the police is an evil made necessary by the new social order.

NOTES

1. This paragraph is based on materials in Thomas Matthews, "Victor Schoelcher's Visit to the Non-French Speaking Antilles in 1840-1841", *Papers Presented at the 3rd Annual Conference of Caribbean Historians, . . . 1971*. Woodville K. Marshall, ed. (Barbados: University of the West Indies, 1974), pp. 49-61, 120-121.

Marie Jean Francois Layrle was born in Port-Louis, a coastal town in northwestern France (Department of Morbihan) on May 6, 1791. He started his naval service around the age of twenty, and over the years he progressed through the ranks. He ultimately had an apparently distinguished career. A three-time recipient of the Legion of Honor, Layrle was also appointed governor of French Guiana in 1842 and governor of Guadeloupe in 1844. After retiring from the navy in 1850, Layrle was called back and served as Director of the French Naval Ministry until 1863; he died in Paris in 1881, at the age of eighty-nine.

We are grateful to *Capitaine de Vaisseau* Duval, head of the *Service Historique de la Marine* of the *Ministere de la Defense (Marine)* in Paris for having provided us with various biographical details on Layrle from which the above sketch has been derived. Captain Duval further informed us that the *Service Historique de la Marine* retains a dossier on Layrle (CC7 1409; *dossiers anciens*) within which more details on his life and naval career can be found.

2. At the time, Layrle was stationed in Martinique. During or not long before April 1840, he visited St. Lucia, St. Vincent, and Grenada, spending a total of six weeks on this tour. In June or July 1840, he went to St. Kitts and then to Jamaica (a second visit was made to Jamaica in January 1842). After returning to Martinique from Jamaica, he went to Trinidad in August 1840 and returned once again to Martinique. Antigua and Barbados were the last two islands visited; the former was visited first. Although the dates of these visits are not certain (and Captain Duval — see note 1 — was unable to find this information in an examination of Layrle's dossier), they occurred on the same trip and took place between November 1840 and April-May 1841 — most probably in the latter period. None of the sources at our disposal provides information on the duration of Layrle's visit to Barbados, but it appears to have been rather brief. The above chronology on Layrle's tours has been reconstructed from his various reports, published in volumes 4 and 5 of the series mentioned below.

THE JOURNAL OF THE B.M.H.S.

Layrle's report on Barbados appears in *Abolition de l'Esclavage dans les Colonies Anglaises (quatrieme publication). Rapports Recueillis par le Departement de la Marine et des Colonies* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1841), pp. 464-498.

The report is in volume 4 of a five volume series dealing with the abolition of slavery and the termination of apprenticeship in the British colonies. The series was published under the auspices of the French Naval Ministry in 1840-1843. The first two volumes are titled *Precis de l'Abolition de l'Esclavage dans les Colonies Anglaises. Imprime par l'ordre de M. l'Amiral Baron Duperre*, and the remaining three are titled *Abolition de l'Esclavage dans les Colonies Anglaises*

These volumes and/or the series do not appear to be widely available. There is a set in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris (shelfmark Nt. 64) and another set is located in, at least, the Naval Archives (*Archives Centrales de la Marine*). The published *National Union Catalog* lists seven libraries in the United States which hold the five volume set, but, upon inquiry from these libraries, it was discovered that only the following have all five volumes: Boston Public Library; Cornell University Library; and the General Library of the University of California at Berkeley. We were unable to verify if Harvard University possesses the set.

In the *National Union Catalog*, the five volumes are cataloged under: "France. Ministere de la Marine"; in the Bibliotheque Nationale, the first two volumes (1840-1841) are cataloged under "Chasseriau, Frederic Victor Charles".

The first volume retraces the measures and principal British laws which preceded the abolition of slavery and orders given by the British government to assure the execution of the abolition act in the colonies; various major colonial acts relating to emancipation and the termination of apprenticeship are translated, and a historical summary of the carrying out of emancipation and the end of apprenticeship is given for Jamaica, Antigua, Guiana, and Mauritius. The second volume deals with the transition from apprenticeship to freedom, and treats the initial effects of the latter in various territories, including Barbados. The account of Barbados (pp. 161-184) is a chronologically ordered narrative of events in 1838 and 1839, focusing on legislative actions and the governor as well as general social and economic conditions. The materials in this volume are based on official reports and letters published in the *Parliamentary Papers*. Volume 3 is also based on materials in the *Parliamentary Papers*, but focuses in a more detailed way on social, labor, and economic conditions in the apprenticeship and postapprenticeship period, up to 1840. Extracts are produced of testimonies given to parliament in 1836 and 1840. Barbados is treated for the latter year with Samuel Prescod's (he was in London at the time) observations and views (pp. 212-215, 261-263, 298-302, 321, 371-377) on topics such as the "moral and material" condition of the freed blacks, the influence of emancipation on agricultural production, the value of property, emigra-

tion to Guiana, and labor conditions and needs.

Volumes 4 and 5 supplement the preceding volumes by largely including eyewitness accounts of various Frenchmen who visited the colonies during the apprenticeship and immediate postapprenticeship periods. Aside from Layrle's accounts, there are additional reports on Antigua, British Guiana, Jamaica, St. Lucia, Trinidad, and Barbados.

Volume 4 (pp. 93-119) contains the report on Barbados by M. Bernard, the attorney-general of Guadeloupe; the report is dated April 1836, and focuses on the years 1834 and 1835. Although Bernard had been a member of Layrle's investigatory team in the early 1840s (Mathews, "Schoelcher's Visit", p. 51), his earlier visit to Barbados (as well as Antigua and Jamaica) with another investigatory group reflected the continuing interest that France had with the socioeconomic implications of emancipation in the British colonies.

3. Mathews, "Schoelcher's Visit", p. 51. Schoelcher's views on Antigua and Jamaica were published in his *Colonies Etrangères et Haiti: Resultats de l'Emancipation Anglaises* (Paris, 1843), 2 vols.
4. On August 17, 1839, an editorial in *The Barbadian* noted that ten members of the Council were living in England, and implied that others of their class were in a similar situation. "We should like to know", inquired the editorialist, "the number of proprietors of extensive landed interests and wealth who are living in England or luxuriating in the soft delicate climates of France and Italy spending their handsome income amongst strangers and leaving it to a few of inferior fortunes to carry out the business of their native country and to battle the watch with the numerous opponents of decency and order" (*JBMHS* viii [1941] 120).
5. Compensation was claimed for 83,146 slaves, but was awarded for 82,807; the latter figure is usually taken to represent the number of slaves at Emancipation. The figures Layrle cites for free coloreds, free blacks, and whites are for 1829 (see Jerome S. Handler, *The Unappropriated People: Freedmen in the Slave Society of Barbados* [Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974], pp. 18-19).
6. Legislative efforts to curb emigration of the freed working class began with "An Act to Regulate the Emigration of Labourers", passed in July 1836, and were followed by acts passed in April 1839 and December 1839. The two 1839 acts were ultimately disallowed, and emigration to Trinidad and British Guiana continued until around 1846; a new emigration phase to these areas started in the 1860s. For details, see G. W. Roberts, "Emigration from Barbados", *Social and Economic Studies*, vol. 4 (1955), pp. 246-250; Roberts, it should be noted, errs concerning the substance and date of the first emigration act and misinterprets the nature of the one passed in December 1839. The 1836 act and the two of 1839 are published in *Parliamentary Papers*

(1837, vol. 53, rept. 521-1, Appendix, pp. 29-30; and 1840, vol. 35 rept. 282, pp. 11-12, 144-145).

The emigration acts of 1839, in particular, provoked a considerable controversy in Barbados and were primarily objected to by the colored population and the ex-slaves. A "memorial", written in 1840, was addressed to the Secretary of State for the Colonies by a "representative committee for the coloured and black races of the inhabitants"; it stressed that one of the "reformatory measures" needed for the island's "well being, peace, and prosperity" was the "necessity of thinning the population by opening the way to liberal emigration" ("To the Right Honourable The Earl of Carnarvon . . ." [Ms. Brit. Emp., S.22, G.54, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University]). Another petition, signed by 1,300 Barbadians, was ultimately read in the British parliament; it complained that the "emancipated Negroes are suffering under arbitrary and oppressive laws" (*JBMHS* ix [1942] 136).

Samuel Jackman Prescod, "a most mischievous demagogue", wrote the editor of *The Barbadian* (*ibid.*, p. 135), was a leader in the protest movement. He presided at the "numerous and respectable public meeting" at which it was agreed that parliament should be apprised of the "exclusive and arbitrary character" of the Barbados legislature's actions "to check the emigration of the labourers" through the "most oppressive enactment interfering with the proper liberty of the subject" (Prescod to J. H. Tredgold, May 29, 1840 [Ms. Brit. Emp., S.22, G.54]).

7. Some indication of the numbers involved can be found in statistics on immigrants from the West Indian colonies who were "introduced at the public expense" to Trinidad and British Guiana: from 1834 through 1841, 3,517 immigrants came to Trinidad, and 7,215 to British Guiana (*Parliamentary Papers*, 1847, vol. 39, rept. 496). We were unable to establish how many of these immigrants were, in fact, Barbadians, but modern authorities generally agree that Barbadians formed a significant number, if not a majority, of the West Indians who migrated to the two colonies. However, a much lower estimate was provided by Samuel Prescod in his testimony before a House of Commons inquiry in 1840. He reported that since emancipation almost all of the Barbadian emigrants went to Guiana, and only a very small number went to Trinidad. When asked if he knew the number of people involved in this emigration, he estimated around one hundred and twenty families, or about four hundred to five hundred persons (*Abolition de l'Esclavage dans les Colonies Anglaises*, vol. 3, pp. 371-372).
8. A point with which Samuel Prescod entirely agreed in his testimony (see note 7). Robert Schomburgk, on the other hand, stressed that "the chief cause of the deficiency [in 1840 and 1841] was the relaxed labour of the peasantry, and the great injury which the cultivation and the manufacture of sugar suffers by a want of continuous and regular labour" (*The History of Barbados* [London, 1848], p. 151). On March

POST-APPRENTICESHIP BARBADOS

- 7, 1840, the editor of *The Barbadian*, lamenting the shortness of the crop, acknowledged that the drought in the preceding year was partially responsible, but he felt "the conduct of the people not working steadily in the field" was the more important factor (*JBMHS* :ix [1941] 21).
9. The major reason, however, for why there was a limited export of rum was that its price "has not afforded sufficient remuneration to induce its manufacture, and the planter has preferred to export molasses" (Schomburgk, *History*, p. 153).
 10. Woodville K. Marshall provides a detailed discussion of the political scene during this period, with particular reference to the role played by Governor MacGregor and his relationship with the legislature ("The Termination of the Apprenticeship in Barbados and the Windward Islands: An Essay in Colonial Administration and Politics", *Journal of Caribbean History*, vol. 2 [1971], pp. 1-45). E. M. Shilstone gives an overview of Barbadian society not long before Layrle's visit ("Barbados in the Year 1840", *JBMHS* viii [1940] 3-12), and a variety of important primary source materials relating to this period are in *Parliamentary Papers*, 1840, vol. 35, rept. 282.
 11. However, *The Barbadian* reported riots in Saint Andrew in July 1838, and by the middle of August freed laborers had refused to work on a number of plantations. At the end of 1839 and in early 1840, more than twenty-seven cane fires occurred in various parishes, and laborers had "struck work on 30 estates"; by February 12, 1840, sixty estates were "abandoned by the laborers" (*JBMHS* vii [1940] 188, 189; VIII [1941] 177; IX [1941] 19, 21). Because of the "weak state of the police force, and the present system of fire raising in some of the parishes", the legislature passed, in February 1840, "An Act to Authorize the Appointment of Special Constables in Aid of the Police Force" (*Parliamentary Papers*, 1840, vol. 35, rept. 282, p. 233).
 12. The Codrington plantations terminated apprenticeship on May 30, 1838, under an agreement signed by Bishop Coleridge and the estate attorney; shortly thereafter, the laborers were discharged from apprenticeship on Stirling plantation, owned by William Matson Barrow (*JBMHS* vii [1940] 186; cf. J. Harry Bennett, *Bondsmen and Bishops: Slavery and Apprenticeship on the Codrington Plantations of Barbados 1710-1838* [Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1958], pp. 133-135). Barrow was among the more liberal planters; a manifestation of this liberalism was that by 1837 he employed, as his estate agent, "Mr. Cummins, a colored gentleman, a merchant of Bridgetown" (J. A. Thome and J. H. Kimball, *Emancipation in the West Indies* [New York, 1838], p. 65). It was highly unusual for a white planter to employ a colored man in this capacity at this time. (For more on Cummins, see note 31).
 13. The "preceding administration" was that of Governor Lionel Smith from April 1833 to August 1836. For various perspectives and details on his administration, see Marshall, "Termination of Apprenticeship",

passim; Handler, *Unappropriated People*, pp. 102-109; Schomburgk, *History*, pp. 451-475; and Claude Levy, "Barbados: The Last Years of Slavery 1823-1833", *Journal of Negro History*, vol. 44 (1959), pp. 308-345. Other contemporaries viewed MacGregor's behavior vis-à-vis the legislature in a different light. For example, in late 1840, Samuel Prescod noted how conditions "are still getting on ill here, the planters having their own way in every thing, and Sir Evan too deeply compromised with them to offer any check. although I have reason to believe that he begins to see his error but too late" (Prescod to Sturge, November 21, 1840 [Mss. Brit. Emp., S.22, G.54, Rhodes House Library, Oxford University]).

14. With the exception of the *Barbados Mercury and Bridgetown Gazette*, which started publication in 1762, the other papers commenced in the nineteenth century. Of the group, the *Morning News* had the shortest life: it started publication in early 1840 and seems to have ceased not long after Layrle's departure from Barbados; at present, no copies of this paper are known to exist. For more details on Barbados newspapers, see Schomburgk, *History*, pp. 124-127, and Jerome S. Handler, *A Guide to Source Materials for the Study of Barbados History, 1627-1834* Carbondale: South Illinois University Press, 1971), pp. 116-118; the latter contains references to other relevant studies.

15. MacGregor had received some particularly stinging criticism from various Barbadian newspapers while he was attempting to end apprenticeship (see Marshall, "Termination of Apprenticeship", *passim*), and on December 30, 1840 the editor of *The Barbadian* wrote a "very strong editorial against the governor's action in liberating" Samuel Prescod from a jail sentence; Prescod had received this sentence, and a £50 fine, as a result of a libel trial in which he had conducted his own defense and had been "very rude to the Bench and said the Chief Justice was illiterate" (*JBMHS*, ix [1942] 142-143).

As an aside, it can be noted that Prescod had been pessimistic about his chances at the trial. A month before the trial took place he expressed his feelings in a letter to James Sturge, the British abolitionist: "I shall have no opportunity, of course, to prove the truth of the allegations, serious as they are; and as I shall have a planter jury and a bench of planter magistrates to try the case, I look forward to conviction and imprisonment as certain" (Prescod to Sturge, Barbados, November 21, 1840 [Mss. Brit. Emp., S.22]).

16. The apprenticeship period is discussed with particular reference to the role of the stipendiary magistrate in the introduction to Woodville K. Marshall, ed., *The Journal of J.B. Colthurst* (New York: Kraus-Thomson, in press).

17. The court came into existence on August 1, 1838; the three judges were Adam Cuppage, Joseph Garraway, and Isaac John Tirling (*JBMHS* vii [1940] 188).

All three were "strangers to the island" and none was "learned in the law", a "precaution" taken by the governor "knowing the circumstances of the time" (*JBMHS* xxxii [1967] 106).

Cuppige became a stipendiary magistrate in January 1837, and Tinling sometime after April or May in the same year (*Parliamentary Papers*, 1837, vol. 53, rept. 521-1, pp. 384-421 *passim*). Cuppage apparently remained on the Court of Appeal through the 1840s (but he was no longer on the court by November 4, 1850), and he died in 1859; Tinling was still a judge as of November 1855 and he may have served as late as 1867 (*JBMHS* xx [1952] 29; *ibid.*, xxiii [1956] 149; *ibid.*, xxxii [1967] 106-107).

Joseph Garraway appears to have been the only colored member of this group (and, indeed, among the stipendiary magistrates in general). He was identified as colored by Thome and Kimball who, during their visit to Barbados in 1837, spoke to "Mr. Galloway [sic] . . . a colored gentleman highly respected for his talents" (*Emancipation*, p. 66). Garraway became a stipendiary magistrate in November 1836 and remained a judge on the Court of Appeal through the 1840s (*Parliamentary Papers*, 1837, vol. 53, rept. 521-1, pp. 384-421, *passim*; *JBMHS* xv [1948] 198); he died, apparently abroad, in 1852: "He was a polished gentleman", reported the *Barbados Globe*, *Official Gazette and Colonial Advocate*, who "filled the office [of judge] with ability and dignity" (*ibid.*, xxi [1953] 36). (See also, note 31).

18. MacGregor first proposed the idea of the Courts of Reconciliation in a circular letter to the island's police magistrates in August 1839, and by September the courts were functioning. They were legitimized by "An Act to Establish Courts of Arbitration and Reconciliation" which passed the Assembly on January 1, 1840; the Council approved the act on the 28th, and it received the governor's assent on the same day. For a copy of this act and related correspondence and materials, see *Parliamentary Papers*, 1840, vol. 35, rept. 282, pp. 145 ff.; the act is on pp. 192-194. According to Schomburgk, the act was confirmed on August 10, 1840, and was to remain in force for three years (*History*, p. 487).
19. This paragraph is given in French in Layrle's account, and is his paraphrase and translation of the original English; our translation causes some further deviations from the original wording.
20. MacGregor, whose "health had been for some time delicate" (Schomburgk, *History*, p. 490), died on June 14, 1841; he was buried in the Saint Michael Cathedral on the following day (*JBMHS*, ix [1942] 190-191).
21. Felix (or Francis) Bedingfield was MacGregor's private secretary (*ibid.*, vi [1939] 93 and x [1942] 32) while Joseph Garraway (see note 17) was for a period of time, starting around late 1839, the "acting private secretary" (*Parliamentary Papers*, 1840, vol. 35, rept. 282, pp. 94 ff.).

22. When MacGregor initially raised the idea of the Courts of Arbitration and Reconciliation (see note 18), he circulated an excerpt from Sir Arthur de Capell Brooke's *Travels through Sweden, Norway, and Finmark . . . in the Summer of 1820* (London, 1823) which described the operation of these courts in Norway. "It occurred to me", MacGregor wrote the Colonial Secretary in December 1839, "that such an institution might be rendered peculiarly beneficial, in their primitive condition, to the labourers of this island" (*Parliamentary Papers*, 1840, vol. 35, rept. 282, pp. 145-146). Layrle translated the English excerpt from Brooke into French; the original that MacGregor sent to the magistrates is published in *ibid.*, p. 147.
23. The reference here apparently is to the period after apprenticeship, rather than to that after emancipation in 1834 (see note 11).

(To be continued)