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Before and After 1865

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A bare list of the events which followed the riots at Morant Bay provokes no argument. But whether these events are, or are not, the consequences of that affray, is a matter of debate. We offer the remarks which follow as a contribution to this debate.

If we interpret the events at Stony Gut and at the Court House in Morant Bay correctly as a statement, uttered in blood, about the unjust relations between men who belonged to different economic classes and also to different ethnic groups, then the direct effects of the riots must be sought in the subsequent attitudes of social groups towards one another. That is we have to answer such questions as, to what extent did the riots change the attitudes of blacks, browns and whites towards one another? Did such changes take place in St. Thomas alone, or over the whole island, or nowhere? Did the riots change the conception each ethnic group had of itself? Did it stiffen the spine of the one and make the other more accommodating? How did it affect the relations between planter and labourer? Did it alter the balance of political power between economic classes?

We cannot give satisfactory answers to most of these questions for three reasons. Firstly, we are limited in what we write here by the kind of historical documents we have used. The information we possess does not allow us to discuss the direct consequences of the riots on social attitudes. But we do have enough information to discuss the effect of the riots on politics.

Secondly, to answer questions of the kind which we have instanced, it is not enough to know what social attitudes were after the riots; it is also necessary to know with some precision what they were before that social disturbance. And this we do not know.

Thirdly, two events intervened between the riots and some of their possible consequences. The intrusion into the society of an alien military force which found no riot to suppress but remained to terrorize a part of that society. And following closely, the imposition of political authority from outside.

So although it is possible to sketch answers to some questions, such as the attitudes of employers to labourers, or the attitudes of ethnic groups to one another for the years before and after 1865, and although we know in general what the society was like before 1865, and what it was like afterwards, it remains difficult to assess the direct consequences of the riots on relationships within the society, because the British interposed themselves in ways which were bound to influence the relations of social groups one to another.

If this is so, it is not the riots which make 1865 a watershed in Jamaican history, but the abdication in that year of political authority by the Jamaicans who possessed it. Later, we shall discuss the relationship between the riots and the passing of responsibility for the society over to foreigners. Now we wish to notice that both the riots and the events which followed them were the working out of tendencies already existing in the society. Since the society survived the riots without alteration of its social and economic structures, the history of Jamaica after 1865 may be read as a record of the extent to which these tendencies were assisted or frustrated by crown colony government.

Notice first that crown colony government strengthened a relationship which already existed. This change in the intensity of the relationship between the society in Jamaica and the government of Great Britain had this effect, among others: it made the society as a whole more dependent, less responsible, less self-directing than it had been. But the society in Jamaica had always been a colonial society. That is to say it had always been dependent on a metropolitan society and its government.

To say that the society had always been dependent, is not to say that early in the life of the society, the white settlers wished it so. They appreciated the advantages, particularly the economic advantages, of independence; but they also understood its hazards. Nor, we may be allowed to guess, did the slaves wish it so. Rebellious slaves surely appreciated that the dependent status of the society was a disadvantage to them.

It was a relationship imposed by superior power, and one to which the white settlers accommodated themselves. Within the bounds set by this power, white property-holders made their lives and fortunes. Foreigners were kept at sea and slaves on the estates. The white community was dependent on the imperial power for its trade and its protection. This was the basis of the accommodation: the white community had an exclusive market for its produce and was protected from slaves and foreigners.

The accommodation of inferior to superior power was made palatable by a concession which the white community had risked much to achieve. In matters which concerned exclusively the ordering of their society, they were allowed to be their own masters. In general this meant that taxes were not imposed on them by the English Crown in order to pay its servants in the colony. The white settlers taxed themselves and so would keep the arrogance of the King's servants within some bounds by withholding public money from them. It meant also that they were left to police the slaves and repress the free black and brown inhabitants without English interference. Finally it meant that they could tax themselves for the few services such as roads, forts, harbours and public buildings which they required in common.

As if to make up for the realization that the important decisions governing the life of their society were taken outside of it, the white community vehemently defended the political jurisdiction they had gained, and even sought to encroach upon what the Crown had marked out for itself.

Fighting with governors, complaining to the Crown and Parliament about the condition of trade and repressing the lower orders is not high politics; but it left its mark on the society. It gave the community a political style which survived at least to the nineteen-thirties. Long after emancipation it was the chief substance of our politics. And it gave to succeeding generations the rhetoric of liberty which has in modern times been put to more substantial use. The seriousness with which the whites conducted their limited politics gave them a cohesion which justifies us in describing them as a community. It was of course the politics of a minority, male, white, propertied and Anglican.

For most of the eighteenth century this accommodation was, on balance, to the advantage of the white community. Gradually it became less so. But by then both the sugar economy based on an exclusive market and the social structure erected to support that economy, the slave society, had become to the white community the natural order of the universe. What had begun as a convenience had

become a necessity. Sugar and slavery bound them to Great Britain.

But even in Great Britain the natural order changes. In that country critics of the old imperial economy and critics of the slave society that went with it, became sufficiently powerful to abolish both.

Emancipation did not shock the white community into a posture of independence. To adopt such a stance they would have had to embrace the doctrine of social equality of all men. What they chose to do, once they had stopped their trans-Atlantic debate with Great Britain about its invasion of their constitutional rights, was to use their political power to make of emancipation a mere word, without economic and social reality.

They were tempted to play this game because although emancipation had conferred civil rights on all ex-slaves, political rights accrued only to those who possessed property to the value required by the laws then in force. By the eighteen-forties their game had been stopped. But unfortunately for the society it had not been stopped by the ex-slaves swarming over the field. It had been whistled off by Great Britain in its role as referee. The white community had been stopped, the black community had been protected, by the British government using its imperial authority to declare null and void any colonial law which offended it.

The imperial power to review colonial legislation had in the past been used to regulate the relations between the two societies, Jamaica and England; now after emancipation it was being used to regulate the relations between two groups within the Jamaican society, ex-slaves and ex-masters. In the earlier period the superior power of England had been exercised to maintain an economic relationship between Jamaica and herself according to the principles of political economy then in vogue. Now British power was being used to establish social relations between ex-slaves and ex-masters according to such humanitarian principles as survived political expediency.

But although British power was now informed by different principles and used for different ends, its exercise served to reinforce the state of dependence of the society. Emancipation brought the blacks into a relationship with the British government which was analogous to the one which the whites had long had.

The society then was comprised of two communities living cheek by jowl; one white, rich and small in number; the other black, poor and numerous; dependent each in its way on an outside power for protection against the other. The whites were protected against the physical force derived from numbers and the blacks protected against the phys-

ical force derived from wealth and political power. This arrangement was on balance to the disadvantage of the black poor.

It is difficult for an outside power to protect the poor effectively, while the rich are allowed to exercise political power over them. Moreover, the presence of the alien power denies the poor their one advantage. For if they resort to force, it is unlikely that they will do so in the full strength of their numbers; and in the circumstances, inadequately armed, they can be speedily curbed. It needed more concern for the society, greater moral stamina than the British power was able to summon, to protect the poor effectively from the rich.

The machine of British imperial administration could, and for the most part after emancipation, did prevent the white community from using the law to fasten the blacks to the plantation; but that machine was ill-designed to promote the interest of the black community in more positive ways. Why did not the black community exert itself to correct this imbalance in the society?

We noticed earlier white accommodation to English superior power and its effect on that community and the whole society. Now we notice black accommodation to local white superior power. To discuss those who accommodated is not to deny the existence, or the importance, of the rebellious, the suicide and the saboteur. It is only to discuss the majority: and it is also to discuss less than extreme attitudes. We do not wish to make Uncle-Toms of the majority of the slaves, but wish to notice the existence of patters of behaviour, simulated at first, but later becoming ingrained, becoming authentic elements in the personality.

The blacks lived in a society which was composed of a congeries of petty domains, the plantations and pens. But these were not merely forms of economic organization, not merely farms and mills for producing sugar. They were also to some extent isolated, self sufficient social and cultural systems. Within their confines the authority of the master was hardly trammelled by law. Beyond its gates all depended on the whim of the master and on the whim of those appointed to authority by his grace. The kick and the caress were equally arbitrary. This was the system of authority that a slave lived with, frequently imitated, and transmitted to his children.

It was on the plantation too that the slave was de-tribalized and slowly made into a creole. Into this creole culture his children were born. Later in the history of the society, if they lived on a plantation which permitted missionaries to instruct and baptize slaves, they could become Christians. But of necessity Christian instruction concentrated on redemption, love, obedience. It was the price mis-

sionaries paid for being allowed beyond the gates of the plantation.

It was not merely that the predominant values transmitted by the plantation to the slave reinforced the subordination to power inherent in his status. Men can and do reject some of the values of a social system not organized for their benefit. But, more important: conduct appropriate to a free society is a social habit, an art which can only be learned in a society which is engaged in the never ending process of helping all its members make themselves free men. There was hardly opportunity for black or white to learn so to conduct themselves before emancipation.

It is therefore no surprise that the black population did not seek power through political means to redress the imbalance in the society. It is more surprising that they did not attempt to do so by force. Riots there were; but when one considers the bitterness engendered during the period of apprenticeship, and the economic deprivation and injustice suffered afterwards, surprisingly few riots occurred. Explanations which refer to the geography of the island and to habits learnt during slavery do not seem adequate. Taken by themselves they are not. But add to them the freedom to starve, guaranteed by the British government after the apprenticeship period, and we may have a clue to the absence of widespread violence and agitation. The blacks did not seek to change the political system because so many of them could ignore it. And of those who could not ignore it? Did they cling to some belief that the Missus Queen would protect them from the worst?

Emancipation was carried by votes, instead of being seized after bloodshed. The British thus had an opportunity to try to arrange its terms in ways which would have set the two communities to learning to live as free men from the date of the establishment of a legally free society. This opportunity was neglected. The society was reconstituted by the will of the British. But for the work to be solidly founded, it needed close and sympathetic supervision. That the British could have done, though they were not fit to do more than that. They were themselves only just beginning to learn how to run a free society. Their disgust with slavery had allowed the ground to be cleared. But although they appropriated the office of supervisor of the society in 1833, it was some time before they worked out what functions they were willing to perform.

The British policy of intervention in the domestic affairs of the society had been adopted reluctantly. It was the only way to end slavery peacefully. The policy was justified on the assumption that the slave masters would never themselves

dismantle the slave society. But after the Act of Emancipation had been passed, the British government acted as if that assumption had been wrong. It seemed to believe that the masters would govern the society and manage their estates in harmony with the principles of the Act. Instead of co-operating, the masters sabotaged the Act again and again. They thus goaded the British government into accepting the argument that the only way to give substance to the Act of Emancipation was for it to take complete charge of the affairs of the society.

But the half-hearted effort made in 1839 to suspend the Jamaican Constitution for five years was carried in the House of Commons by so small a majority that the government regarded it as a defeat. So within five years of emancipation the British government's resolve to function as the supervisor of the new society had been weakened by those Englishmen who had a sentiment for liberty as an abstraction. They were unwilling to disturb the political privileges and the property rights of their kith and kin in Jamaica.

The British government now adopted the policy which would determine the way it exercised the role of supervisor between 1840 and 1865. The basis of the new policy was the conciliation of the white community. The old policy had been founded on mistrust of the masters. The hostility of the House of Assembly to the British government had been one result. The second was more grave than the first. For the old policy had served to exacerbate the painful social relations of slavery. To prolong that policy was to delay the beginning of new social and economic relations. It would be better for the blacks, better for the whole society, to change the policy. So argued the British administrators who recommended the new policy to the British government.

The attempt to make the white community accept responsibility for the whole society by force had failed. The attempt to assume full control of the affairs of the society had been abandoned. The attempt would now be made to persuade the white community of the wisdom of themselves conducting responsible politics.

The old policy assumed the absence of goodwill in the white community. The new policy assumed the absence of self-interest in the black community. This policy professed to have at heart the interest of all parties. In fact it suited the interest of two only, the white community and the British government. The essence of the new policy was that it put away a big stick which was never to be used anyway. To that extent it was more honest than the old policy. But it was equally ineffective. It put away a stick, but dangled no carrots. The

British government should have done in 1839 what it eventually did in 1944: enfranchised the whole population. Instead the British government coaxed the whites into lowering the voting qualifications they did, but only enough to enfranchise a minority.

It is true to say of the black that he was then unfit; but in all the senses in which this judgement is true and relevant, it is also true of the white. In both cases their disabilities were due to their being the creatures of a slave society. Therein lies whatever justification there was for allowing the British government a role in the affairs of the society. An effective role would have for a time, put both communities at an equal political disadvantage. The policy of conciliation buttressed the existing advantages of the white community and encouraged the blacks to be dependent on Missus Queen. We may judge the success of that policy both by the Appeal of the Poor People of St. Ann and by the reply to it, the Queen's Advice.

Some of the elected members did turn their energies to the constructive politics of establishing a free society. But they had to work within the old parliamentary system of the House of Assembly which had been perfected for opposing policies of the Executive. It was relatively easy for those who preferred to live in the past to use this machinery to wreck or frustrate efforts to grapple with the present. The result of such politics, the persistent neglect of the welfare of the society as a whole, was the riots which erupted in the middle years of the nineteenth century.

There is another reason why British intervention in the society did not take a more positive form. It was due to the eclipse of the humanitarians by the accountants, as a major force in British parliamentary politics. British colonial policy after 1830, so far as it was concerned with the protection of indigenous peoples against settlers in South Africa and New Zealand, and of ex-slaves in the West Indies, meant spending money on the soldiers and the administrators necessary for its execution. Between 1834 and 1845 the Negro Education Grant largely supported primary schools in the West Indies. But the accountants in the Imperial Parliament persistently questioned the philosophy behind these activities until the Colonial Office and the Treasury understood that it would be very difficult to get the House of Commons to vote the money necessary to sustain that policy. When in 1841 he signalled the approaching end of the Negro Education Grant, Lord John Russell justified the decision on the grounds that the Negroes were much better able to pay for the education of their children than could English labourers.

In equity the British government should have helped to pay for the building of a free society. Since it was unwilling to do so, it should have used its office of supervisor of the society to ensure an equitable incidence of taxation; that is to make those who benefitted most from the economic structure of the society contribute significantly to the public coffers.

The British government let the poor carry the public services for nearly a hundred years. Before 1865 it was content to lecture the House of Assembly. After 1865, although Governors reported on the tax structure from time to time, the Colonial Office did not go beyond the hand-wringing of the impotent. The British government reserved its largest gestures for propping up the plantation economy. When the policy of free trade had severely damaged that economy the government guaranteed in 1848 the interest on a large loan which the planters could use to import labourers to work on the sugar estates. Again when the inept financial management of the Assembly had made Jamaica practically bankrupt, the British government in 1854 guaranteed a loan of half a million pounds sterling to restore the country's public credit.

If one assumes that two communities, such as those in Jamaica after emancipation, whose lives and history are extensively intertwined, are better integrated, and if one also assumes that societies are the better for being self-governing and democratic, the years between 1838 and 1865 were largely wasted.

The British presence frustrated both processes. The whites did not accept political responsibility for the whole society and catered to their own interests. They resented the British for emancipating the slaves and for changing British commercial policy from imperial protection to free trade. They resented the blacks for refusing to work on the plantation at all, or for working there only when it suited them.

The services, notably education and health which the society needed after emancipation, were scarcely provided for out of local funds. The administration of justice particularly in the courts of petty sessions, was dominated by the white community and the property owners. Injustice flourished.

The blacks were for the most part excluded from the political system, and of those who qualified by virtue of property, many stayed outside. The black community also opted out of the plantation economy wherever possible. This process meant a search for land to buy or squat on, and the beginnings of the drift to the towns. Immediately after emancipation those who lived in the free villages shared a communal existence, even though it was

one made rudimentary by poverty, and paternal by close missionary supervision. But progressively, the rejection of the life of an estate casual laborer meant living in isolation. And after about 1845 there was a falling away of that interest in church membership and school attendance which had marked the early years of emancipation. Some of the people had begun to opt out of the cultural system as well.

In the five years before the riots at Morant Bay the society was marked by a certain restlessness. The religious revival had involved its devotees in a long march around the island. Their provision grounds untilled, they poured out their energies, physical and emotional, in repeated acts of devotion. Their unrestrained fervour indicated how sick the society was. The American civil war had brought to all an economic depression, worsened by a succession of floods and droughts on provision grounds. To some it also brought the fear of invasion.

A section of the white community began to advocate the abolition of the representative constitution in its present state. The meetings held after Dr. Underhill's letter to the Secretary of State became public, criticized the House of Assembly for wasting taxes and demanded not its abolition but its reform. In 1859 there was prolonged rioting in Sav-la-Mar and in Falmouth. The rioters in both instances were tried with results which on the evidence seem equitable.

We may learn from these riots and from the Assembly's debates on the future of the constitution what dangers threatened the society. We can also see how they might have been averted. If one part of the society had not been able to look for help overseas, if it had no choice but to find its own solutions within the society, it would probably have responded, even at so late an hour, by providing political remedies. Indeed had a more balanced judgement presided over the Jamaican administration in 1865, would Ramsey and Hobbs and the Maroons have been let loose over seven hundred square miles of eastern Jamaica? As it was Eyre had his bad judgement reinforced by those who themselves sought the solution for the ills of the society overseas. Eyre unleashed an alien force at Morant Bay and two months later opened the door to alien political authority. Who remembers the Falmouth rioters? Who would have remembered the Morant Bay rioters? We remember them because as Eyre himself wrote, "The retribution has been so prompt and so terrible that it is never likely to be forgotten". Since so many were innocent the act of October 1865 was not retribution, it was murder. Ought we not to remember Morant Bay in greater measure for the many who suffered, rather

than exaggerate the achievement of the few who rioted?

We wrote earlier that although the evidence with which we are familiar did not allow us to say in what ways social attitudes and social relations changed as a direct consequence of the riots, it did allow us to discuss whether the political changes after 1865 were directly due to the riots.

It may be said in support of the argument that the loss of the old constitution was a direct consequence of the riots that one of the accounts usually given of this event is that 'the English took it away'. And when it is so stated, it is implied that the English took the constitution away because the Morant Bay riots showed them that the society was unable to govern itself, that it was not fit for self-government.

About the British government's policy it need only be said that although the Colonial Office would have liked the constitution changed or abolished, the policy of waiting for Jamaicans to change their own constitution had been accepted by the Secretary of State in July 1865 as the only feasible policy. The constitution could not be touched in any way by the Minister simply acting in the name of the Crown, and exercising the Royal Prerogative. It could only be changed by the Imperial Parliament; and after the experience of 1839 no British government would lightly have gone to the House of Commons with a bill for suspending the Jamaican Constitution.

The decision not to use the Imperial Parliament meant that change could only come from the Jamaican Parliament itself. But even so the British government adopted the policy of keeping quiet and waiting hopefully for the deed to be done, because it feared that to give public encouragement to those who wished for change would cause such widespread resentment in the society that it would make it doubly difficult to get a majority for change in the House of Assembly.

Another explanation given for the change of constitution is that the white members of the House of Assembly panicked after the riots, fearing that they were about to be massacred by the blacks, and accepted Eyre's invitation 'to immolate the constitution on the altar of patriotism'. This explanation has the merit of looking for the reason for change in the local society, but it does not fit the information we have of the final session of the House of Assembly. It is true that the Assembly passed very quickly all the repressive laws which Eyre had prepared for them. But not the bill to change the constitution. That the members took of their leisure, trading concessions among themselves, and producing a hodge-podge of a law which changed

the constitution but left political power in the hands of the white community.

The constitution was not changed by the British; it was changed by Jamaicans. They changed it after the riots, but not because of the riots. They did not intend to change representative government for crown colony government, they were tricked into this by Eyre.

We have already elaborated on the first two assertions, we now turn to the others. Was the constitution changed by the House of Assembly because of the riots? Notice first that the desire to change the constitution existed before the riots; also that this desire was felt and expressed by a variety of groups. The question then is why was the constitution not changed before? Is it because a majority did not exist in the Assembly for change before the riots, but was produced by the riots?

A majority existed for the abolition of the existing constitution, or as it was sometimes said, for the reform of the constitution but for how long before 1865 it is difficult to say. What did not exist was a majority for a constitution to replace the old one. For crown colony government there was hardly a vote. The 1865 Session of the Assembly ended without a majority for any definite form of government. It was Eyre's triumph that he got the second amending act through a much depleted House of Assembly. Before we elaborate on Eyre's role let us look at the attitudes expressed before Eyre took a hand.

We have to guess in the absence of precise information, but we guess that the largest group was the one moved by the desire to put the representative constitution out of reach of the black population. They argued that now was the time. The numbers of negroes qualified to vote had grown, was growing and would soon be such as to allow them to control the legislature by electing black members. There were other motives for changing the constitution; some thought that for its institutions to work well they had to be staffed by a greater number of able men than the island could supply. Others thought that as a device for making the old constitution more efficient the Executive Committee had failed; it had been the cause of faction and of party and it had been the source of corruption. Their remedy was to give the executive offices to Englishmen appointed by the Secretary of State. At the Underhill meetings yet another group expressed its opinions. The black propertied tax payers criticized the Assembly for waste and they warned it that if it persisted in its old habits it would be abolished.

Before 1865 the abolitionists were unable to agree on what was to replace the old constitution. This was not simply a division between those who wished to let the British have a bigger role in pol-

itics and administration and those who did not. It was also due to factions among the whites. The division was crudely between those who had, however timidly, worked for an integrated society, and those who were against them for this act of collaboration. Such men, angry both against the British and the blacks, wished to hoist the constitution above the reach of propertied negroes, abolish the Executive Committee and keep the British out of Jamaican politics.

What did the riots do to these attitudes? So far as one can tell, nothing. What it did do was to provide the abolitionists with a broker, or to use the metaphor of a contemporary, a midwife. It is of course possible to combine the explanation which adduces panic with the broker-midwife description of Eyre's role, though the description does modify the notion that the constitution was surrendered in a moment of intense panic out of fear of the blacks. But it is best for us to treat the two matters, the attitudes of the members of the Assembly and the role of Eyre in changing the constitution separately.

The attitude pre-1865 of those who wished to keep the blacks outside of politics was not to surrender power to Great Britain, but to raise the property qualification both for membership of the House of Assembly and for voting. The attitudes of those who thought the society could not produce forty-seven members of the House and seventeen members of the Legislative Council was manifest in their proposals to consolidate both houses into a single chamber legislature. There were a few voices raised before 1865 for 'strong government', by which was meant government by Englishmen. We do not know the evidence which shows panic because panic would have meant a wholesale conversion of the first two groups to the position of the third, government by Englishmen. This obviously did not happen.

What happened was that the various groups none of which before or after the riots was large enough to get its own way, were kept talking long enough to produce a law, the first act amending the constitution. This was the product of horsetrading; it was untidy, contained tidbits for everybody, and was certainly not what any of the parties wanted, least of all Eyre. Did the riots put the various groups in a mood for horsetrading which would have been absent without the riots? Almost certainly, but they would not have continued talking but for Eyre.

The riots gave Eyre the opportunity to propose a change of constitution which without them he would not have been able to do. That is, in the interval between the riots and the meeting of the legislature Eyre felt able to prepare a draft bill and

introduce it to the House through the Executive Committee. An act which in normal times would have been difficult, since Westmoreland for instance, would not have introduced such a bill. Even so, Eyre understood from the start that although what he wished was crown colony government, if he drafted such a bill it would never pass the Assembly. So he drafted a bill to establish a single chamber, with half its members elected and half nominated, and the Crown in control through the casting vote of the governor. But even this bill the Assembly mauled according to its own prejudices and interests.

Whatever it was that kept them talking, the magnet, the force that held them together was spent by the time the deed was done. Badly mauled as was the first amending act, particularly where it sought to give control to the Crown, Eyre urged the Colonial Office to accept it rather than send it back to the floor of the House, for then it was sure to be entirely lost.

If this was the mood of the Assembly why was Eyre able to get the second act passed? Briefly he took advantage of two things; one was that the House had thinned towards the end of the session as the country members went home for Christmas. Secondly he made brilliant use of the general disagreement over what sort of constitution should replace the old. He had told the Secretary of State that there were almost as many opinions on that as there were members. Yet even in the reduced House Eyre could not have got a positive bill written. He was able to let each group feel that if they merely repealed the first amending act and left it to the Crown to enact a new constitution, they would get the constitution they wished for. Hence the consternation with which the crown colony government constitution was greeted in 1866.

Eyre was able to insert himself a second time into the legislative machine through his use of a despatch which the Colonial Secretary had written before he received the first amending act. This despatch he sent to the House in an abbreviated version, suppressing those passages which did not support his plans.

He explained to the House that since it passed the first amending act, a despatch had arrived from the Colonial Office which laid down the conditions on which the British government would accept responsibility for Jamaica, that is protect whites against blacks. He had informed them of these conditions by excerpts from the despatch because it was confidential, and so they could not see it all. In the process he made the Colonial Secretary say clearly, what in his despatch, could at most, be only doubtfully inferred. That is, he made it look as if the first amending act was certain to be rejected.

This was enough to tempt those dissatisfied, for whatever reason with the first act. Here was the opportunity to get the form of constitution they preferred.

Eyre did not realize that what was clever politics was illegal. The English Attorney General informed the Secretary of State that the second amending act was *ultra vires*. The Assembly could amend the constitution but it could not abolish it and leave to the Crown the making of a new constitution. It matters here that the Secretary of State had decided before the riots that he would accept changes in the West Indian constitutions. The task of his staff was now only to find a way around the Attorney General's opinion. The only answer was an act of the Imperial Parliament. The Colonial Office staff was not sure that they could depend on the House of Commons. But the choice was between the Commons and the Assembly. The Assembly was certain to reject a third amending act. The Colonial Office chose to use the House of Commons. There, the act to give the Crown authority to make a constitution for Jamaica passed quickly enough. Thus was the old constitution abolished.

We now discuss some of the consequences of crown colony government. What benefits did the society gain from passing political authority over to the British? And what price did it pay for the benefits? We may draw up a crude balance sheet by assessing how the British used the political authority they had acquired in 1866. They had claimed that their presence in the society was justified because only they would be able to do three things, all of which the society badly needed. First they would tidy the public service and administration and make them more efficient; secondly they would provide impartial government between conflicting classes; thirdly they would look after the interests of the blacks, protect them from the whites and from themselves. These statements of principles to guide the administrators who would make, in each case, their own political programme. The British said from time to time that crown colony government was temporary; that it worked towards its own death; that as soon as the society had learnt the arts of responsible politics, it would again govern itself.

The constitution of 1866 gave the British political authority in an autocratic form. The governor was sure of his majority and the society was represented only by his nominees. The Order-in-Council of 1884 set some limits to the extent that any governor could play the autocrat, by permitting the elected members when acting in concert to veto his bills and resolutions. But it did not modify the essentially autocratic character of the crown col-

ony constitution. For the next sixty years this was the constitution of Jamaica.

We begin our assessment of the use the British made of their political authority in Jamaica by distinguishing between the constitution as written and politics as practised by the functionaries of the crown colony constitution. The theory of the constitution asserted autocracy. The practice of politics assumed an oligarchy.

The autocratic power was not in general use. It was conceived for a form of opposition which died with the old constitution. The Colonial Office likened the governor's permanent majority to a phalanx. If any group was unreasonable enough to block the road to progress, the governor had the powers with which to scatter them. But after 1865 the mercantile and planter classes had no need for such crude tactics. And so the autocratic power which originally was to have been the instrument for transforming the society, became merely the instrument for asserting the imperial interest, even when that was as crassly conceived as it was in the 'Florence' case; and later still the autocratic power was used principally to protect the salaries of civil servants from the attacks of the elected members. On such occasions it appeared only after the governor had uttered the formula 'of paramount importance to the public interest'.

To say that crown colony government was in practice an oligarchy, is to gloss over the differences in style and in substance which distinguished the administrations of different governors. But, with one exception, it is not to distort significantly. Grant was the exception. He was the only autocrat. He had the will, and he had the advantage of inaugurating the new constitution. The export economy was buoyant, and it was too soon after Morant Bay for the old politicians to engage in unrestrained protests. Towards the end of his regime, they did protest over his failure to consult them, but their voices were still muted. After he had retired, they attacked his policies in earnest, particularly the Rio Cobre irrigation works.

Grant's practice may have been true to the letter of the constitution, it was not true to the spirit in which the Colonial Office expected crown colony government to work. Sir Henry Taylor was against governor-autocrats on practical grounds. He feared that they would inflame the local populations and bring down crown colony government in a very short time. The nominated unofficial members of the Legislative Councils, were not for him mere window-dressing. He justified their nomination on two grounds. First they embodied the principle of no taxation without representation. As the owners of the largest properties, agricultural and commercial, Taylor presumed them the mainstay of the

revenue, and so the most appropriate local voices. He was wrong; but the despatches on the incidence of taxation did not perceptibly shake his belief in this argument. Secondly he wished for an opposition to the governor, and through the protests of that opposition, for local criticism of schemes sent up by governors for his approval.

Yet Taylor did not expect the governors to become the creatures of the local oligarchies. He expected career officials to resist the influence of the larger commercial and agricultural interests. It was asking too much of them. By choosing the unofficial members to represent interests in the Council, by expecting them to be consulted, Taylor created within the system itself the opportunities for the large property holders to influence the decisions of the crown colony administrators. When one also takes into account that these men, for the most part, could be expected to share the general opinions which the local oligarchies had about the society, it is not surprising that crown colony government failed to live up to the large claims Taylor made on its behalf in 1865.

It was easier to establish a relatively efficient administration than to be both an impartial administrator and the protector of the blacks. It was impossible to prepare a people for responsible government and democratic politics by surrounding foreign administrators with propertied men, elected on a restricted franchise, and able to exercise a veto on expenditure. That was the way to teach sterile and irresponsible politics.

There is no doubt about the accomplishments of crown colony government. It came as close as was humanly possible to fulfilling the first of the three claims made on its behalf. Grant established the administrative apparatus of a modern state. Old departments were made more efficient, new ones were created. Rational procedures for the administration of the country's finances were introduced; detailed estimates of revenue were prepared, debts funded, taxes collected. New courts were established to dispense justice to the poor. Abandoned land was declared forfeited to the Crown, and squatters were given titles. The public system of elementary education was started. So too was the public medical service. Roads and bridges were built.

This list tells us that in seven years Grant did most of the things which the society needed since 1838, but had not done for itself. It is perhaps an exaggeration to say that emancipation created the state. But it may serve to emphasize the limited nature of public responsibilities before emancipation. The sessions of the House of Assembly during the period of slavery were the occasions when the slave-masters met to treat with the King and to set-

tle a few matters of mutual concern. Whatever else was needed each master provided within his own domain. At emancipation one function was formally taken from him; that of judging and punishing the labourers on his estate. The Act of Emancipation specifically enjoined him to his other functions. He was to continue to provide the apprentices with the traditional services. He successfully flouted the act. He found ways to judge and to punish, and to withdraw the services he had provided.

The British at first paid for justice and education. In neither case was the service adequate, but that it was provided at all was a great boon to the newly emancipated population. When the British stopped paying, the masters, still in control of the public purse, left the services to volunteers; education to the churches and justice to themselves. The cholera epidemics forced them to spend large sums of money, but when it was over Jamaica was still without a public health service. So up to 1865 the state had barely acknowledged its responsibility to provide services for the whole society.

The British government lectured the Assembly on its duties to the society. The Assembly invariably replied that the economy ruined by emancipation and free trade could not afford public services. Is it then to the lack of means rather than to the absence of will that we must look for an explanation? The state of the economy may well have explained wide disparities in the public expenditure for services, between one year and the next. But what has to be explained is not uneven expenditure from year to year, for it was not the case, but the pittance spent on some things and the large sums spent on others, between 1838 and 1865. Compare for instance the total sum spent on education to that spent on immigration.

The explanation lies in the belief of the planters that widespread education was against their interest since it would quickly reduce the numbers of those willing to labour on estates. Moreover, they were convinced that the state had one responsibility above all others. And that was to keep the sugar estates in existence. The priority thus accorded sugar over welfare services was justified by equating the private interests of estate owners with the public interests of the state. Sugar was the revenue and the revenue was sugar. No sugar, no revenue, no public services.

It is to Grant's credit that he challenged the assumptions which made this reasoning plausible. The failure of his successors in office and of their superiors in the Colonial Office to construct alternative bases for economic development was in great measure due to their acceptance of this reasoning as correct. The most important economic

event of the last century, the export trade in bananas owed nothing to crown colony government. But the country was fortunate that the trade was so firmly established by the eighteen-nineties when sugar prices steeply declined.

However inadequate we judge the explanation that the Assembly gave for its neglect of the interests of the whole society before 1865, there is a connection between the export economy and the public welfare services. Where so much of the revenue came from import duties, the revenues were affected by the decline in imports which followed whenever the value of exports was reduced. When world market conditions for sugar and other products deteriorated, it was bananas and other fruit which prevented a disastrous decline in the revenue.

Eisner calculates that public expenditures between the end of the eighteen-sixties and the beginning of the nineteen-thirties rose seven-fold on health, eight-fold on public works and twenty-four times on education. It may also be appropriate to notice that from Eisner's calculations it does not seem that the expenditure on education or on health was ever steadily above 10% of the expenditure during the crown colony period up to 1930.

We have acknowledged what was done; we must now estimate its worth to the society. First we consider the machinery of administration; the claim that the system would be rationalized and made more efficient was fulfilled, but without wishing to deny what was accomplished, its limits are suggested by two comments. The efficiency of crown colony government, particularly during its first period when it shone by comparison with the inefficiency of representative government, need not overawe us. It was the inability of the Colonial Office to tell exactly where the finances of Jamaica stood in 1882 which led to the appointment of the Royal Commission of that year. Secondly, efficiency was attained by concentrating all power of making decisions in the hands of the Colonial Secretary.

So the price paid for the advance in administration, was centralization and paternalism. Almost certainly any reforming government would have centralized administration in the capital; but one which had its roots in the country would not have perpetuated the ascendancy of the Colonial Secretary and the Colonial Secretariat. As a device to bring order out of near chaos, the institution may have been necessary in the years after 1866 but if the functionaries of crown colony government had taken seriously their professed intention of working towards its death, authority would have been dispersed, at least after 1884.

Equally damaging to the society was the practice of appointing foreigners as heads of departments long after there had been time to train natives for these posts. In most cases it was simply alleged that natives with the qualities required were not available but for some posts, such as that of Chief Justice and that of Attorney General, it was argued that natives were not desirable in the interest of justice.

In general we may conclude that the price paid for administrative efficiency was high. In 1865 the high posts in the administration were no longer the preserve of white natives and during most of crown colony government such posts were reserved for white foreigners. Paternalism and the social importance of a white skin were still characteristic of the society in 1865 although these values were by then no longer sacrosanct. By restoring whiteness as a necessary quality for jobs at the top of the administration, crown colony government reinforced the racial prejudices inherent in the society.

Secondly, we consider the services provided through the administrative machinery. For most of the period the British adhered to the principle that a crown colony could have all the services its revenues could afford. Within these limits it was left to individual governors to divide the cake. The society benefitted from the public services in at least three ways; Jamaica became a more orderly and law abiding, a more healthy and less isolated society after 1865.

The administration of justice during crown colony government restored the confidence of the poor in the court as a place where they might expect a fair trial in a dispute between unequal contenders. They preferred to use the District Courts presided over by foreigners rather than go before the native justices in courts of petty sessions. However the weaknesses of crown colony government are apparent; there was not enough trained justices, those in offices were overworked and with the consequent delay in hearing cases and increased cost of seeking justice. Moreover there was no sustained examination of the substance of the law administered, nor of the extent of the punishment inflicted on the guilty. From time to time administrators in the Colonial Office had good intentions, but here as elsewhere these remained on paper. For instance against its better judgement the Colonial Office sanctioned flogging as part of the punishment for praedial larceny in response to local demand.

The building of roads and bridges gradually connected isolated communities. For a long time even the coastal towns had depended on communication by sea; the network of roads not only made it easier for some small settlers to market their crops, it also

made possible the growth of that feeling of oneness which later served as the basis for nationalism. If less was done to open up the country than was possible, it was because peasant agriculture remained the unattended step-child of crown colony government, land settlements notwithstanding.

The impetus for much that was attempted came from the report of the Royal Commission of 1897. In urging the British government to establish a department of Economic Botany in the West Indies, they commented that 'the cultivator of one product is often quite ignorant of the best means of cultivating any other, and does not know whether his soil and climate might be better adapted for something else. These remarks have special reference to the small cultivators, but they are not wholly inapplicable to persons interested in the larger estates'. The Imperial Department of Agriculture was established and the local department of agriculture was enlarged, but the money spent on the crops of the small cultivator, the time and energy spent on his problems, were as nothing compared to what was lavished on estate agriculture.

Thirdly, we consider how far crown colony government achieved the other aims it set itself. The claim that it would provide impartial government and protect the interests of the poor and ignorant, can be stated as a promise to bring the society into equilibrium. Then when the contending classes were in equipoise crown colony government would come to an end. During the time when the poor were being developed and the rich restrained, the whole society would have learned the style of responsible politics appropriate to a free society.

The British failed to live up to claims made in a moment of hubris. British civil servants temporarily stationed in a foreign society, were supposed, without check, to adequately protect the interests of the poor and ignorant. They did not. This was not because they did not care, but because they should not have been expected to care so much. They were not subjected to pressure on behalf of the poor while the nominated and elected unofficial members effectively lobbied in their own interest. When the early vision had faded, the major concern of crown colony government became to avoid another riot. By rioting in 1938 the poor and ignorant wrote their own epitaph on the system. It did not bring two unequal social groups into equilibrium; it reinforced the dominance of the power of wealth and frustrated the thrust of the power of numbers.

Although the British failed in large measure to be impartial administrators and to protect the inter-

est of the poor and to teach the society responsible politics, even here they achieved a measure of success. What the gain was to the society is difficult to assess, but bits of evidence suggest that some of the poor were persuaded of their impartiality between contending classes.

One bit of evidence comes from a memorandum submitted to the 1882 Royal Commission by a group who claimed to speak on behalf of the 'hundreds of the negro inhabitants of Kingston and its neighbourhood'. They said among other things that they were 'fully conscious that without the protection of the government our fellow colonists would not permit us to enjoy the breath we breathe'. The document is redolent of the belief that their enemy was the white and brown propertied class who controlled the island since slavery. The relevant question is how widespread were these opinions among the black population? The literary sources known to us do not say.

So we now only suggest that the opinions expressed in the document to the 1882 Royal Commission seem to make sense of the campaign and the results of the 1944 election. The party which made the immediate goal bread rather than independence, and which made the enemy the propertied class rather than the British, may have owed its victory in part to an appeal which was in harmony with the beliefs of a large portion of the electorate. The electorate may have been mistaken in identifying the party led by the professional men with the propertied class, but if so it was a natural mistake for them to make in the circumstances of the island's history. The slogan 'self-government is slavery', whatever it may have meant to those who used it, echoes the voice of 1883, 'without the protection of the government our fellow colonists would not permit us to enjoy the breath we breathe'. And it may well be that those to whom it was addressed took it to mean more than those who used it ever intended.

So at the end of 1944 the upward thrust of the power of numbers which had been stopped at the end of 1865, reasserted itself. It would please us to add that the thrust now took a form which showed the benefits that had accrued to the poor from eighty years of crown colony government. But of that there is no sign. They voted, as they might well have voted in 1866, in their own interest. How much had they learnt of democratic politics and of responsible government in the interval? One test is that they voted into power a party to whom the forms and nuances of parliamentary democracy were alien. The apprenticeship in responsible government may well have started for the society in 1838 or 1866 or 1884. It only began in 1945.