

M 551

ness and prosperity which the colony would attain  
 d by wisdom and virtue. Every step which was  
 time seemed to encrease the general satisfaction  
 tiality and public spirit of his conduct.  
 Seaforth, the Prisoners of War had been confined  
 ich had rendered the Town Hall extremely incon-  
 General Assembly<sup>34</sup> and had been productive of  
 opolis as well as of danger to the Community. The  
 n its proper light and determined to employ his  
 vance. Accordingly on the arrival of the Magi-  
 ize, his Excellency peremptorily refused to permit  
 e: and the Captain, Ogilvy, was obliged to carry  
 nsequence of this judicious determination proper  
 made for confining all Prisoners of War on board  
 ed for the purpose; and inhabitants were delivered  
 ng laboured under by the detention of these per-  
 he impolicy of all restrictions on trade not author-  
 Excellency's next care was to allow, by Proclam-  
 'orn, Corn Flour and Meal, which had been pro-  
 1 of Mr. Ricketts.<sup>35</sup>  
 t pursuant to adjournment on the fourteenth of  
 ned the Session, with the following most gracious  
 sses were returned:—

n of the Assembly:  
 one me the honor of trusting to my charge the  
 ncient of his West India Colonies, I feel great  
 lay meeting for the first time the Colonial Parlia-  
 charge is such as might make any man proud, and  
 annot help encouraging it, in the hope that it will  
 i measures as may be most conducive to the good  
 id the prosperity of Barbadoes; Considerations in  
 d together. Having left Britain at a time when  
 vere anxious about your situation it was a lively  
 ears disappointed, and I congratulate you on the  
 s which Providence has lately sent you—I wish  
 to your happiness by bringing with me tidings of  
 ambition or rather the rapacity of our enemies  
 distance, perhaps they are not a little encouraged  
 stile combination of Powers, from whom Britain  
 / different line of conduct. Let us still trust in a  
 an overruling Providence will in his own good  
 mous and beloved Sovereign the blessing he is  
 for: that of bestowing on his Kingdoms a Peace  
 and safety of the British Empire. His means for

did not mean, as in common parlance it has come to  
 . The General Assembly is properly the name of the  
 ncial and Assembly, the local counterpart of the King,  
 n. In Poyer's day the Assembly and the Council were  
 the Governor presided at meetings of the Council.  
 of the present emergency of affairs" was unanimously  
 y the Council at their meeting of the 19th Jan. 1796.

procuring this desirable object cannot but be greatly increased through the  
 additional strength acquired by the happy Union of Great Britain and Ire-  
 land into one Kingdom, an event on which we must all find great reason for  
 mutual congratulation.

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the Assembly:

I take this first opportunity to assure you I shall make it a very particular  
 part of my duty to preserve to you and your Constitutents all your just and  
 Constitutional rights and privileges, and in this duty I shall feel the more  
 pleasure because I am confident you will continue to exert yourselves in  
 securing tranquility and prosperity to this Island, of whose Legislature you  
 form so important a branch; by preserving this line of conduct you will best  
 promote the good of the King's Service and secure to yourselves the continu-  
 ance of His Royal approbation.

Gentlemen of the Council,

Mr. Speaker and Gentlemen of the Assembly:

I feel the anxiety naturally incident to my situation, but tho' I doubt my  
 abilities to fill properly the station to which his Majesty has appointed me,  
 I am convinced I shall experience your candid interpretation of my conduct,  
 and I have great reliance on the effect of your co-operation to strengthen my  
 administration, for I will to the best of my judgment cordially and sedulously  
 unite with you in every measure which tends to preserve the constitutional  
 freedom of, and necessary subordination in the Island, to promote the cause  
 of religion and virtue, to encourage trade, and to secure the property and  
 happiness of all ranks of people."

On the motion of Doctor HINDS, one of the Representatives of the Parish  
 of St. James, it was unanimously resolved, that Three Thousand Pounds Currency,  
 per Annum, should be settled on his Excellency, during his administration of the  
 Government. Doctor Hinds accordingly introduced a Bill to this effect, which,  
 having passed the Assembly, was sent up to the Council, and received their con-  
 currence the same day. On presenting this Bill to the Governor for His Excellency's  
 assent, the Speaker of the Assembly, the Honourable JOSHUA GITTENS, deliv-  
 ered the following Speech:—

"In presenting to your Excellency the Bill I have in my hand entitled  
 'An Act for the better support of his Excellency the Right Honourable  
 FRANCIS LORD SEAFORTH during his administration of the Government  
 of this Island', I feel a pleasure from the Office I hold in being the bearer  
 of this offering of the Assembly and People of Barbados, to a Nobleman  
 whose fair fame comes handed to us, as combining the manners and dignity  
 of the Gentlemen, with the ability, diligence and conciliatory temper of the  
 Statesman, Soldier, and Patriot. Under the pressure of the times, and  
 especially of the visitations of the Almighty, by two successive years of  
 Drought, we lament that our Public resources will not allow us to indulge  
 that liberality of sentiment which our necessities alone could have restrained;  
 but such is our confidence in your Excellency, and in your discernment of  
 the motives by which we are influenced, that we hope this testimony of our  
 esteem and attachment to your person, will be received as cordially as it has  
 been offered, and that your Administration will be distinguished as an era of  
 happiness and prosperity to Barbados, and your feelings gratified by a return  
 of our warm affections and public gratitude."

This was not only unseasonable, but was in some measure *mal a propos*.  
 The vote of the Assembly required no apology whatever. The salary allowed  
 the Governor was equal to the settlement of any former Commander-in-Chief for

upward of seventy years,<sup>36</sup> and there could be no reason for deviating on the present occasion from an establishment which had received the sanction of time. Be this as it may, Lord Seaforth seemed very little pleased with the offering of the Assembly, or the manner in which it was made. He coolly replied "You are best enabled to judge of what is necessary to maintain the dignity or respectability of your chief Magistrate, tho' from different circumstances my appointment has been far below that of any former Governor of Barbados. I am sorry for your sakes as well as my own for the causes. I cheerfully accept what you are pleased to give, and shall while I remain here exert myself to render my administration as beneficial to the Country as I possibly can."

The Governor soon after sent a message to the Assembly, calling the attention of the House to two points connected, as he thought, with the good of the Country and called for by common humanity: The first was the state of the free Negroes, which he represented as being so extremely wretched as to have affected his feelings in no ordinary degree. He considered the provision made for them utterly incompetent for their support, and recommended to the Assembly to adopt some measure which, along with their freedom, might insure to those people the means of existence when age, sickness or misfortunes render them incapable of procuring it by their own exertions. The second point to which he solicited the attention of the Assembly is the state of the poor Debtors in the common Gaol; for whose subsistence no provision whatever is made. This omission His Lordship reprobated in terms as forcible as they were just. No state in Europe, he observed, could furnish a similar code. It was cruel to punish insolvency with death and equally inhuman to suffer the lives of the debtors to depend on the casual charity of the Gaoler. This strong representation, however, availed nothing. The Assembly took the first part of His Excellency's message into their immediate consideration, pledging themselves to turn their attention to the condition of the poor prisoners at their next meeting.

The propriety of the proposal respecting a legal provision for the support of such slaves as should be emancipated is certainly a very questionable point. However humane the motive might have been in which the scheme originated, it must be allowed to have been highly unreasonable. Numbers of all complexions are daily brought into the world whose means of subsistence are precarious and uncertain; and who, tho' born free are to labor in their journey through life with no other support than the fruits of their own industry. Thousands are born to no other inheritance than poverty, with no alternative but to work or to starve. Yet no claim is made on the Legislature of their Country to provide a fund for their maintenance. When age, disease and adversity reduce them to penury, they have no refuge from hunger and nakedness but the generosity of their parochial vestry. There surely is no reason why the free man of colour should be more liberally provided for than the other inhabitants of the West India Islands. If liberty is such a blessing as the advocates for the abolition of slavery contend for, is it not enough that the owner should restore his slave to freedom without being compelled to provide for his future support? Why should the emancipated African be exempt from the common lot of humanity, to eat bread in the sweat of his brow? That many free coloured people are pining in indigence surrounded by

36. An inaccuracy, due no doubt to hurried writing. It was sixty, not seventy years earlier, i.e. on the arrival of Sir Thomas Robinson in 1742, that the custom began of voting the Governor a salary of £3000 a year. Robinson's immediate predecessor, Lord Howe, had been voted £4000 a year, and his immediate predecessor had been voted £6000 a year. The decrease was due to continuing hard times. In June 1802, the Assembly decided to increase the amount of Lord Seaforth's establishment, but nothing seems to have been done till two years later, when his salary was increased to £4000. *Minutes of House of Assembly* 15th June 1802, *Minutes of Council* 28th August 1804.

every evil which poverty brings in its train is most certainly their wretched condition is the consequence of their providence. Far otherwise is it with those who, obdurate, labour for their daily bread. But of these small to those who prefer indolence with want to companion plenty.

The Island was already overrun by free people and dubious principles afford but an ill exchange known attachment of the numbers of laborious planter loyal subjects who, for want of due encouragement, their native soil.<sup>37</sup> The House of Assembly, deeply of these truths, readily availed themselves of the opportunity sent them by His Excellency of repressing the grievance clearly that by increasing the sum made payable by a slave, they might not only comply with the Government better support for them when manumitted, but that the amount almost to a prohibition of the baneful practice of the Attorney General, Mr. Beckles, second motion was immediately introduced, enacting that on the owner should pay the Church-Warden of his Parish Pounds—the interest of which should be annually paid per person emancipated. The Bill passed the Lower House being sent up to the Council for their concurrence, requiring the payment of Three Hundred Pounds or more and reducing the sum payable on the manumission to One Hundred Pounds. The amendment after a slight opposition and Mr. Bell being agreed to, the Bill was returned to the Governor for his assent. The Governor had been forsaken by his usual sagacity: while blinded by the prospect of affording a better support to the colored people, he had prudently calculated to prevent the evil it ostensibly

37. Poyer was evidently much perturbed by this shift of the authorities to do anything to prevent it. He dilates on it again in the History at pp. 60—1 and pp. 129—130 considerably after the sugar slump of 1799 as to which see *Minutes of Council* 21st Jan and 18th March 1800.

38. The background of this Bill is instructive. In 1774 manumissions "on the spur of resentment at the manumission will of an old lady who, at the same time that she be neglected to make provision for their maintenance, so that it was a burden on the Parish." By that Act, £50 was payable by the master of every slave on manumission, the interest on which was being devoted to the upkeep of the freedman. In so far as the manumissions however, the law was a failure, for in 1774 a resolution of the Assembly to increase the sum payable on the manumission was defeated mainly by the efforts of the Solicitor-General. This measure was defeated mainly by the efforts of the Solicitor-General and the background of the Act of 1739 see *Minutes of Council* March 1774.

The decision of the Council in 1801 to make a sum of money payable on the manumission of male and female slaves was in principle of the Bill of 1774, the reason being of course that the natural increase of the free population. But the sum payable must be taken subject to the altered value of money which was about three or four times more than what it was in 1774. John Beckles in *Minutes of House of Assembly* 2nd. Jul. 1801 Act of 1801 see further *Letter Addressed to . . . Lord Seaforth*

there could be no reason for deviating on the present which had received the sanction of time. Be seemed very little pleased with the offering of the which it was made. He coolly replied "You are best necessary to maintain the dignity or respectability of on different circumstances my appointment has ner Governor of Barbados. I am sorry for your causes. I cheerfully accept what you are pleased in here exert myself to render my administration I possibly can."

sent a message to the Assembly, calling the atten- s connected, as he thought, with the good of the non humanity: The first was the state of the free is being so extremely wretched as to have affected ee. He considered the provision made for them port, and recommended to the Assembly to adopt h their freedom, might insure to those people the sickness or misfortunes render them incapable of ons. The second point to which he solicited the e state of the poor Debtors in the common Gaol; on whatever is made. This omission His Lordship s they were just. No state in Europe, he observed, ves of the debtors to depend on the casual charity sresentation, however, availed nothing. The Assem- cellency's message into their immediate considera- a their attention to the condition of the poor pri-

osal respecting a legal provision for the support emancipated is certainly a very questionable point. ight have been in which the scheme originated, it ighly unreasonable. Numbers of all complexions d whose means of subsistence are precarious and ee are to labor in their journey through life with of their own industry. Thousands are born to no with no alternative but to work or to starve. Yet islature of their Country to provide a fund for disease and adversity reduce them to penury, they d nakedness but the generosity of their parochial i why the free man of colour should be more liber- inhabitants of the West India Islands. If liberty ates for the abolition of slavery contend for, is it ld restore his slave to freedom without being com- support? Why should the emancipated African ot of humanity, to eat bread in the sweat of his d people are pining in indigence surrounded by

ubt to hurried writing. It was sixty, not seventy years mas Robinson in 1742, that the custom began of voting ear. Robinson's immediate predecessor, Lord Howe, had imediate predecessor had been voted £6000 a year. The . times. In June 1802, the Assembly decided to increase lishment, but nothing seems to have been done till two reased to £4000. *Minutes of House of Assembly* 15th August 1804.

every evil which poverty brings in its train is most certain; nor is it less certain that their wretched condition is the consequence of their insuperable laziness and im- providence. Far otherwise is it with those who, obedient to nature's irreversible decree, labour for their daily bread. But of these the number is comparatively small to those who prefer indolence with want to labour and her smiling com- panion plenty.

The Island was already overrun by free people of colour whose dissolute lives and dubious principles afford but an ill exchange for the industry, talents and known attachment of the numbers of laborious planters, ingenious mechanics and loyal subjects who, for want of due encouragement, have been compelled to quit their native soil.<sup>37</sup> The House of Assembly, deeply impressed with a conviction of these truths, readily availed themselves of the opportunity unintentionally presented them by His Excellency of repressing the growing evil. They saw very clearly that by encreasing the sum made payable by law on the manumission of a slave, they might not only comply with the Governor's design of providing a better support for them when manumitted, but that the operation of the Act would amount almost to a prohibition of the baneful practice of emancipation. On the motion of the Attorney General, Mr. Beckles, seconded by Doctor Hinds, a Bill was immediately introduced, enacting that on the manumission of any slave the owner should pay the Church-Warden of his Parish the sum of Three Hundred Pounds—the interest of which should be annually paid for the maintenance of the person emancipated. The Bill passed the Lower House unanimously; but on being sent up to the Council for their concurrence, an amendment was proposed requiring the payment of Three Hundred Pounds on the manumission of a female and reducing the sum payable on the manumission of a male to Two Hundred Pounds. The amendment after a slight opposition on the part of Doctor Hinds and Mr. Bell being agreed to, the Bill was returned to the Council Chamber and received the Governor's assent. The Governor on this occasion seems to have been forsaken by his usual sagacity: while blinded by an erroneous humanity he was deceived into a concurrence in a measure which holding out the specious prospect of affording a better support to the object of his benevolence, was prudently calculated to prevent the evil it ostensibly professed to remedy.<sup>38</sup>

37. Poyer was evidently much perturbed by this shift in population and by the failure of the authorities to do anything to prevent it. He dilates on it in the *Letter* at pp. 20—1, and again in the *History* at pp. 60—1 and pp. 129—131. Emigration probably increased considerably after the sugar slump of 1799 as to which see *Minutes of the House of Assembly* for 21st Jan and 18th March 1800.

38. The background of this Bill is instructive. In 1739 an Act was passed to restrict manumissions "on the spur of resentment at the manumission of several slaves by the last will of an old lady who, at the same time that she bequeathed freedom to these slaves, neglected to make provision for their maintenance, so that they might have become in time a burden on the Parish." By that Act, £50 was payable to the parochial authorities by the master of every slave on manumission, the interest on this sum—about £4 per annum—being devoted to the upkeep of the freedman. In so far as it was intended to prevent manumissions however, the law was a failure, for in 1774 a Bill was introduced into the House of Assembly to increase the sum payable on the manumission of a female slave to £100. This measure was defeated mainly by the efforts of the Speaker, Sir John Gay Alleyne. For this and the background of the Act of 1739 see *Minutes of the House of Assembly* 15th March 1774.

The decision of the Council in 1801 to make a substantial difference between the amount payable on the manumission of male and female slaves was a reversion to the principle of the Bill of 1774, the reason being of course to prevent not only the artificial but the natural increase of the free population. But the degree of increase in the amount payable must be taken subject to the altered value of money. In 1774 the value of money was about three or four times more than what it was in 1801—As to which see speech of John Beckles in *Minutes of House of Assembly* 2nd, July 1799. For Poyer's views on the Act of 1801 see further *Letter Addressed to . . . Lord Seaforth* p.25.

8300-1085

210-2105