



Center *for* Research Libraries
GLOBAL RESOURCES NETWORK

The Center for Research Libraries scans to provide digital delivery of its holdings. In some cases problems with the quality of the original document or microfilm reproduction may result in a lower quality scan, but it will be legible. In some cases pages may be damaged or missing. Files include OCR (machine searchable text) when the quality of the scan and the language or format of the text allows.

If preferred, you may request a loan by contacting Center for Research Libraries through your Interlibrary Loan Office.

Rights and usage

Materials digitized by the Center for Research Libraries are intended for the personal educational and research use of students, scholars, and other researchers of the CRL member community. Copyrighted images and texts may not be reproduced, displayed, distributed, broadcast, or downloaded for other purposes without the expressed, written permission of the copyright owner.

Center for Research Libraries

Identifier: 89b99031-2156-4d43-bde5-61d4b5133008

Range: Scans 001 - 010

Downloaded on: 2022-05-24 15:54:39

SLAVES IN THE COLONIES.

(Insubordination at Antigua.)

Return to an Address of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 8th March 1826;—*for*

COPY OF ANY INFORMATION

Which has been received by His Majesty's Government, from the Governor, or Collector of the Customs of *Antigua*, respecting some acts of Insubordination on the part of certain *Africans* forfeited to His Majesty under the Acts abolishing the Slave Trade; and the Proceedings had thereon.

Colonial Department, }
Downing-street, }
9 May 1826. }

Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,
9 May 1826.

SCHEDULE.

- N° 1.—Copy of a Letter from Collector of Customs to Earl Bathurst, dated Antigua, 10th May 1825 :— With two Enclosures - - - pp. 3—5
- N° 2.—Ditto - - - d° - - - dated Antigua, 2d September 1825 :—With one Enclosure - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - pp. 6—7
- N° 3.—Copy of a Dispatch from President Athill to Earl Bathurst, dated Antigua, 2d September 1825 :—With one Enclosure - - - - - pp. 7—8
- N° 4.—Copy of a Dispatch from Earl Bathurst to the Officer administering the Government of Antigua, dated Downing-street, 20th October 1825 - - p. 8

INFORMATION

Relating to Insubordination of Slaves at Antigua,
&c.

— N° 1. —

Copy of a LETTER from Collector of Customs to Earl Bathurst, dated Antigua,
10th May 1825 :—With 2 Enclosures.

Custom House, Antigua, 10th May 1825.

SIR,

I DO myself the honour to lay before you Copy of a Letter which I felt myself called upon to write to the Judge of the Vice Admiralty Court of this Island, upon the subject of the Africans, unindented and under my immediate care, requesting his advice and assistance how to act, for keeping some subordination and good order amongst these people. Copy of the Judge's answer to my letter, I do myself the honour likewise to enclose; and it is therefore unnecessary to trouble you, Sir, with a recapitulation of the circumstances detailed therein, excepting to say, that the magistracy here are very averse to interfere at all with the Africans under my care. I am therefore left entirely to my own discretion, how to punish the unruly and disorderly part of these people.

This task, I am sorry to say, however great formerly, is *now* become almost too great, where the discipline of (moderate) corporal punishment is not inflicted.

The number now under my care, is increased to 208. I have always been averse to flogging, and never yet inflicted a lash with a cat upon any one of them; locking-up for a short time, has been my manner of punishment; and though it was a difficult task, with that mode, to keep any thing like good order amongst them, yet, in a few instances excepted, when their numbers were much smaller, I found it to answer; but at present it is almost impossible, with lenient means, to effect this desirable object.

You will perceive, Sir, the Judge of the Vice Admiralty Court suggests, whether it would not be advisable to have suitable apartments built, for occasional confinement; at present, I have no such place; and it frequently happens, if I order them to be locked up, when they are drunken and riotous, they kick the door open, and laugh at me.

I have, &c. (signed) *Geo. Wyke*, Collector.

Robert Wilmot Horton, Esq. M. P. &c. &c. &c.

Custom House, Antigua, May 6th, 1825.

SIR,

I BEG to venture this trespass upon you, feeling assured that I cannot act, on the present occasion, more properly than by availing myself of your assistance and advice; and I do not hesitate, therefore, to request it, as I cannot doubt, it having been in the contemplation of His Majesty's Government, in framing the "Consolidated Abolition Act," that the Judge of the Vice-Admiralty Court, in all matters of moment relating to the captured Africans, should be applied to.

I beg leave to inform you, that about three months ago, one of the Africans under my care, ran away from the African Hospital, for no possible reason that he

4 INFORMATION RELATING TO INSUBORDINATION

Enclosure,
continued.

can assign ; I have frequently sent out parties of the Africans, upon my list, to find and bring in to me all the stragglers and the runaways, to prevent their being a mischievous nuisance in the country, as well as to keep them from getting into scrapes by robbing, &c.

This man has hitherto eluded the search made after him until yesterday, when he was brought in by two of his countrymen, whom I had sent out to his haunts, which were discovered by his stopping one of my female Africans going on leave to English harbour, with intent to rob her.

I mentioned the circumstance to the sitting magistrate for the week, and requested him, as I had no place of security to confine men in, to send him to gaol for a short time, at least by way of punishment, and indeed to secure him from returning to this course of life, by which not only the lives of persons he may be induced to rob on the highway, are endangered, but his own become forfeited to the offended laws of the country.

The magistrate has refused to assist me with any place of confinement, unless I bring forward the woman he stopped on the highway ; but I feel loth to do this, as it may endanger the life of the man, and have preferred, for the present, putting him in the little room at the African Hospital, with one leg in the shackle, to keep him from immediately running away again ; but for which precaution he would kick the door open, and be off again. I shall keep him there for 24 hours, until I can get some room or place in which to put him, where he may be kept some little time as a punishment.

In venturing to put this man, with one ankle in the shackle to secure him, I feel I take a step, which may by possibility, make me liable to a second vexatious complaint to my Earl Bathurst against me, for putting an African in irons ; yet, where I am armed with the conscious feeling of acting upon this occasion as I have done upon every other relating to the Africans under my care, with every humane and considerate motive for their good and welfare, I do not shrink from the responsibility. But in thus acting, it becomes my duty, I conceive, to beg your opinion, what course I am to pursue, to the end of my securing good order and subordination amongst the Africans under my care, now increased to 200 in number ; and to beg, that you will assist me suggesting some mode of punishment for the unruly and wicked ones, for really I am now perfectly at a loss how to manage them. I have been averse to flogging them with a cat, and really my forbearance in this respect, has been productive of much irregularity, and want of obedience to my orders.

I have no place in which to confine the men, for the room where hitherto I have locked them up for ill behaviour, they kick open at pleasure, and bid me defiance ; and I am sorry to say, the magistrates will not give me their assistance, unless the Africans are carried before them by persons for assaults or thefts, &c.

And as putting the Africans under some sort of restraint, is now more than ever necessary, I will feel obliged by the kindness of your advice, how best I am to act.

Dr. Crichton, my medical attendant, of the African Hospital, has seen the culprit in question, since I have put one of his ankles in irons, and is of opinion, it is the only way to keep him confined, and that it cannot possibly hurt him in any way. Yet I shall only keep him in for 24 hours. I need hardly add to you, Sir, that my task, in the care of 200 of these Africans, is a most arduous and truly distressing one to me.

I have, &c.

(signed) *Geo. Wyke*, Collector.

A true copy. (signed) *W^m Simpson*.

His Honour the Judge of the
Court of Vice Admiralty, &c. &c. &c.

OF SLAVES AT ANTIGUA.

5

May 8th, 1825.

SIR,

Enclosure,
(2.)

I BEG to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 6th instant, and to assure you, that I am fully sensible, as well from public report, as from the experience I have had in the Vice Admiralty Court, since the operation of the "Slave Trade Consolidation Law," of the arduous and unpleasant duties which devolve on you, in consequence of having the care and superintendence of the numerous condemned Africans in this Island.

You are aware, that by the 24th section of the above mentioned Act, the authority or right of interference of the Vice Admiralty Court, is limited to the complaint of ill-usage on the part of such condemned Africans, as are actually under indentures of apprenticeship. The framers of this law, conceiving, no doubt, that all, or nearly all of this class of persons would be so apprenticed, and not being at all aware that this is generally thought to be so objectionable a form of servitude, that a large proportion cannot be placed out as apprentices, and not being otherwise provided for by the Government, are left exclusively to the charge of the collectors of His Majesty's Customs.

The English laws relating to apprentices, if even they extended to this country, would not, of course, meet the cases of those who are not under indentures; and the magistrates are naturally scrupulous of exercising any discretionary power, except where there has been some actual breach of the peace or other crime against society, to be prosecuted in like manner as all similar instances where other free subjects are concerned.

But I am perfectly aware, from the ignorant, immoral, and in short *savage* condition of these persons, there must daily occur circumstances, where not only admonition, but even some personal restraint may be necessary on your part, as regards their own future improvement and permanent welfare.

In many cases not involving points particularly cognizable by the laws, they ought to be treated like great children; thus, when they are truant to any proper employment which has been assigned them, the quarrels between one another, and particularly between the sexes in their conjugal relations, neglect of their persons, petty thefts, drunkenness in the men, a profligate and obscene life in the women; these, and numerous other instances, seem to require some salutary power on your part to convince them of their error, and to lead them, by some humane course of correction, into a more decent and respectable line of deportment.

I really think, that the law, in assigning to you the office of their guardian has left much to your *discretion*, as concerns their physical and moral condition; and I am confident, from your long experience in the habits and disposition of these people, and the known generosity and benevolence of your character, it will not be abused.

It may, perhaps, be proper to submit circumstances to the Secretary of State, and the heads of your department; and whether it might be advisable to have built suitable apartments for occasional confinement, with a view of correcting the evils your letter alludes to.

With regard to the particular individual you mention,—if his crime against society has been so serious as attempting to rob on the highway, I think he ought to be handed over to the magistrates, with all witnesses; and in cases of this flagrant description, no consideration of your being their legal *protector* should induce you to screen them from the course of justice.

Any observations of mine on these points are only those of an humble individual; and I have merely thrown them out, in consequence of the opinion which you appear to entertain, that the law would induce you to look up to the "Judge of the Court of Vice Admiralty," in matters of moment relating to the condition of this most unfortunate class of persons in question.

I have, &c.
(signed) *Nicholas Nugent.*

A true copy. (signed) *W^m Simpson.*

George Wyke, Esq.
Collector of His Majesty's Customs, &c. &c.

6 INFORMATION RELATING TO INSUBORDINATION

— N° 2. —

Copy of a LETTER from Collector of Customs to Earl Bathurst, dated
2d September 1825 :— With one Enclosure.

SIR,

Custom House, Antigua, 2d Sept. 1825.

I AM compelled, from a sense of duty (though I make this further intrusion upon you reluctantly) to acquaint you, for Earl Bathurst's information, of the measures which I have lately been obliged to adopt with respect to the unindentured Africans under my care. From the very frequent, disorderly, unruly and riotous conduct of these people, and the total impossibility of my keeping them in any good order; I have been obliged, upon a *recent* occasion, of the men and women fighting and stabbing each other, at the African Hospital, to consult our present Commander in chief, Mr. Athill, upon the propriety of my sending them afloat, to be out of the way of their getting new rum, and where they might, from being under some restraint, be better managed (unless that he would allow me a corporal's guard to keep peace and quiet amongst them at the Hospital), and my reporting to Mr. Athill, that I could procure a large vessel of about 200 tons, which would be fitted up commodiously by the owner, for the purpose of keeping the Africans dry and comfortable on board, (one half of which vessel divided off for the women, to separate them at night from the men), and fitted with an awning, to screen them from the sun in the day-time. The Commander in chief concurred in opinion, that it would be advisable to adopt this plan of security and welfare for the Africans.

In consequence of which I have contracted for this vessel at 20*l.* sterling (or 40*l.* currency) per month, agreeably to the terms mentioned in the accompanying letter from Mr. Kentish to me; and on Tuesday last I embarked them on board the hospital ship, having previously taken the doctor who attends the Africans, to approve of the vessel and its eligibility for the due comfort of the people, and which I reported to Mr. Athill.

Although so short a time has elapsed since my putting the Africans on board, from my holding out the indulgence of letting some of them come on shore to reside, as could get respectable persons as masters and mistresses to take them under their charge, and to provide lodgings for them in their own premises, and to be further answerable for their being kept at home after half-past nine at night, and finding some domestic employment for them; I am happy to say, no less than eleven of these Africans have brought forward to me persons of respectability, who have undertaken for their good conduct, and to provide, under these stipulations, lodgings in their own premises for them.

At present I have only thirteen of the Africans in hospital, sick, and under the doctor's immediate care; but who, when reported well enough, will be dealt with as the others have been. With respect to the men, I am sorry to say, that only one has as yet got any respectable person to receive or be answerable for good conduct; and I much fear, that from the known licentious and riotous conduct of them, I cannot hope to succeed in the desirable object of putting them out; and I feel it now more than ever necessary, that some employment, for the men particularly, should be contrived to save them from utter ruin.

I trust my Lord Bathurst will approve of the mode at present adopted, of putting the Africans afloat out of harm's way. It was gratifying to me, to be enabled to relieve from prison confinement (where they had been some time) fifteen of the men and women, who had been committed by the magistrates for rioting and fighting, upon my pledging myself to send them out of the way of committing similar offences.

Constant complaints were made to me, from persons residing in the neighbourhood of the African Hospital, of the great danger of the town being set on fire, from the constant practice of the Africans keeping a number of candles burning almost all the night, in open defiance of the orders and regulations I laid down for observance in the hospital.

I have, &c.

(signed) *Geo. Wyke*, Collector H. M. Customs.Robert Wilmot Horton, Esq. M. P.
&c. &c. &c.

OF SLAVES AT ANTIGUA.

7

Antigua, 24th August 1825.

Enclosure.

SIR,

I BEG to acquaint you, that the alteration and improvements you required to the hulk are now completed.

In compliance with your further request, to be informed what I will engage to find the necessary conveyance, to and from the vessel, and convenience for dressing their victuals, &c. &c.

I will engage as follows:—To find boats to take the African apprentices on board, and again on shore, as may be required; a boat and two men to attend the hulk daily; two men to remain on board at nights; casks sufficient to contain water for their use; erect a proper kitchen on board; make the daily report required; all of which, together with the hulk, for 40*l.* cash per month.

I think you must consider the above moderate, when you reflect on the expense and trouble I have been at in laying platforms of plank in the hold and half-deck; divisions apart for the women; bulwarks and railing round the hatchway, for the safety of the children; cutting ports for a free ventilation; and the accommodation the vessel is capable of affording, being nearly 200 tons, and moored safely with large chains and anchors. I remain, &c.

(signed) *Joshua Kentish.*A true copy. (signed) *W^m Simpson.*

George Wyke, Esq.
Collector of H. M. Customs.

— N^o 3. —

Copy of a DISPATCH from President Athill to Earl Bathurst, dated Antigua, 2d September 1825:—With one Enclosure.

Government House, Antigua, Sept. 2d, 1825.

MY LORD,

THE Collector, Mr. Wyke, reported to me early in the last month, the frequency of riots among the unindentured Africans under his charge, and especially one that occurred in the African Hospital at a late hour in the night of the 1st ultimo, of a very serious nature, which required my interference and support, to remedy a repetition of the like disturbances.

Mr. Wyke proposed to me, as a temporary measure, the propriety of contracting with some person for the hire of a hulk, for the greater security and restraint of the most turbulent and riotous characters of this description of people; he pointed out to me, at the same time, that it would be impracticable for him to maintain peace and harmony amongst them, if some such measure was not immediately adopted; and it appearing to me, under all the circumstances of the case, that Mr. Wyke's suggestion was the only effectual and practicable one available for securing the observance of more orderly and becoming behaviour on the part of a great majority of the African apprentices, I sanctioned the adoption of the measure, until I shall hear from your Lordship on the subject. A contract has accordingly been entered into between the Collector and Mr. Kentish, for furnishing a hulk properly fitted up for the accommodation of these people, with every necessary attendance and care, and I consider the charge very moderate, a copy of which contract I herewith enclose.

I have, &c.

(signed) *Samuel Athill.*

The Right Hon. the Earl Bathurst, K. G.
&c. &c. &c.

8 INFORMATION RELATING TO INSUBORDINATION, &c.

Antigua, 24th August 1825.

Enclosure.

SIR,

I BEG to acquaint you, that the alteration and improvements you required to the hulk are now completed.

In compliance with your further request, to be informed what I will engage to find the necessary conveyance to and from the vessel, and convenience for dressing their victuals, &c. &c.

I will engage as follows:—To find boats to take the African apprentices on board, and again on shore, as may be required; a boat and two men to attend the hulk daily; two men to remain on board at nights; casks sufficient to contain water for their use; erect a proper kitchen on board; and make the daily report required; all of which, together with the hulk, for 40*l.* cash per month.

I think you must consider the above moderate, when you reflect on the expense and trouble I have been at in laying platforms of plank in the hold and half deck; divisions apart for the women; bulwarks and railing round the hatchway, for the safety of the children; cutting ports for a free ventilation; and the accommodation the vessel is capable of affording, being nearly two hundred tons, and moored safely with large chains and anchors.

I remain, &c.

(signed) *Joshua Kentish.*A true copy. (signed) *C. Taylor, Priv. Sec^r.*George Wyke, Esq.
&c. &c.—N^o 4.—

Copy of a DISPATCH from Earl Bathurst to the Officer administering the Government of Antigua, dated Downing-street, 20th October 1825.

Downing-street, 20th October 1825.

SIR,

I HAVE received your dispatch of the 2d September, and I approve of the measures which have been taken under your sanction by the Collector of the Customs, of removing the refractory unindentured Africans to a hulk hired and fitted up for the purpose of receiving them. In conveying to the Collector my approbation of this proceeding, you will express my hope, that the system he has adopted will be regulated with every attention to the health of the Africans, and that it may be effective for the restoration of order.

I have, &c.

Officer administering the Government
of Antigua.(signed) *Bathurst.*

SLAVES IN THE COLONIES.

INFORMATION

RELATING TO

INSUBORDINATION OF SLAVES
AT ANTIGUA.

*Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,
9 May 1826.*
