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P A P E R S

PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT, BY HIS MAJESTY'S  
COMMAND,

IN EXPLANATION OF THE MEASURES ADOPTED BY  
HIS MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT

FOR THE MELIORATION OF THE CONDITION OF

**THE SLAVE POPULATION**

IN HIS MAJESTY'S POSSESSIONS IN THE

WEST INDIES,

AND

ON THE CONTINENT OF SOUTH AMERICA.

*[In further continuation of the Papers presented in March 1832.]*

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**1832.**

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*Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,  
27 July 1832.*

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**S C H E D U L E.**

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# SLAVE POPULATION :

## WEST INDIES AND SOUTH AMERICA.

— No. 1. —

Circular DESPATCH from Viscount *Goderich* to the Governors of the  
*West Indian* Legislative Colonies.

Sir,

Downing-street, 12 May 1832.

IN my circular despatch of the 10th of December last, I stated to you so fully the reasons which induced His Majesty's Government to recommend to the several Colonial Legislatures the adoption of the provisions of the Order in Council of the 2d November, for improving the condition of the slaves in the colonies of Trinidad, British Guiana, St. Lucia, the Cape of Good Hope and Mauritius, that it is unnecessary that I should again go over the same ground, or that I should attempt to describe with how much regret the intelligence has been received of the rejection by the Colonial Assemblies of the plan proposed to them.

The refusal of the Colonial Legislatures to adopt the measures submitted to them for the relief of the slaves, is the more to be regretted, because, in the view which His Majesty's Government took of this question, they had felt it to be their imperative duty to combine, in the consideration of the practical measures to be adopted, the interest of the masters with that of the slaves, and to adhere inflexibly to their determination to propose measures calculated to benefit the former only when satisfied that adequate means had been adopted for the improvement of the condition of the latter. The combination of these two objects appeared to them to be the only effectual mode of satisfactorily meeting the complicated difficulties of the question; and I can confidently assert that there cannot be a greater error than the supposition that in the course which they took His Majesty's Government were deficient in sympathy for the embarrassments under which the West India proprietors were labouring, or that they were desirous of forcing upon their adoption any measures which tended, in their judgment, to increase those embarrassments, or to impair the means of successfully contending against them.

The feelings which dictated their policy were entirely different; and they are still of opinion that the course which they proposed to pursue was the best calculated to avert the evils which every year's experience has demonstrated were likely to follow from the prolonged agitation of the vehement controversy upon all questions connected with West India slavery.

The principal reason, however, which has for the present suspended any further proceedings upon the subject of the Orders in Council, is to be found in the appointment of a Committee of the House of Lords (of which you have doubtless already been apprised), for the purpose of instituting an inquiry into the actual state of society in the West India colonies, and into the laws by which the mutual relation of the owner and the slave are regulated. Without having in any degree altered the opinion expressed in my despatch of the 5th of November, that no such inquiry was necessary in order to enable His Majesty's Government to determine how far the law of slavery, as it now exists in the British colonies, stands in need of improvement, they have nevertheless thought it right to offer no opposition to the appointment of this Committee; not only from their deference to the general wish to that effect which had been manifested, but also because they cannot but entertain a hope that the recommendations of this Committee may yet induce the Colonial Legislatures voluntarily to adopt such measures as may be found expedient for the accomplishment of those plans of amelioration which, in pursuance of the unequivocal language of both Houses of Parliament, have been so urgently pressed by successive Administrations.

The House of Lords has entrusted this inquiry to a Committee, many members of which are closely connected with and deeply interested in the prosperity of the

*Vide Papers presented to Parliament on the 15 March 1832.*

West Indian colonies. It may, therefore, be reasonably expected, that the advice which may be offered by them will be received by the local Legislatures, not only with all the respect and attention which is due to the position in which they stand, but also with the confidence which is naturally given to advisers having a common interest with those whom they address.

It is in the hope, then, that the advice of this Committee will meet with every attention from the Colonial Legislatures, that His Majesty's Government have been induced to abstain from urging the various objections which might have been entertained to the proposed inquiry. They have felt that the rejection of a proposal which they had hoped might have been the means of settling this most difficult and embarrassing question, has left them but a choice of evils: and, upon the whole, they have thought it better to incur the certain inconvenience of postponing the relief which is so urgently required, both by the planter and by the slave, and to encounter the risk which must necessarily attend the prolonged agitation of this subject, and the hostile discussions to which, it may be feared, the inquiry will give birth, than to proceed at once to bring before Parliament any measures of a more decisive nature.

They are not unaware that in many respects the course which they have determined to pursue is liable to these and to other strong objections; but, on the other hand, it may be expected that the inquiry which is about to be undertaken will either make manifest to all that the Government is under the necessity of taking further and more effectual measures, or, what I much more gladly anticipate, it may be the means of inducing the Colonial Legislatures voluntarily to carry into effect that reform of the existing law of slavery to which His Majesty's Government have looked as the means of satisfying both the claims of humanity and the dictates of prudence.

Of the increasing necessity of such a co-operation on the part of the colonists with these views, His Majesty's Ministers are more than ever persuaded, nor can they help entertaining the strongest conviction that the delay which has taken place in fully acting up to the principles of the Resolutions of 1823, has driven many who would originally have been contented with their enforcement, to press for the immediate and unqualified abolition of slavery. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the Committee of the House of Lords may be the means of prevailing upon the Colonial Legislatures to take a just view of their situation, and of the increasing difficulties with which it is surrounded. In the meantime further proceedings with reference to the plan announced in my despatch of the 10th of December will be deferred; and it will be your duty to inform the Legislature of the colony under your Government, at their next meeting (unless you should previously receive instructions to the contrary), that the recommendation to them to adopt as a law the Order in Council of 2d November, is, for the present, not to be pressed upon them.

I have, &c.

(signed)

GODERICH.

— No. 2. —

Circular DESPATCH from Viscount *Goderich* to the Governors of the  
*West Indian Crown Colonies.*

Sir,

Downing-street, 13th May 1832.

BY the circular despatch addressed to the Governors of the colonies having independent Legislatures, which I have the honour to enclose, you will learn that, in consequence of the appointment of a Committee of the House of Lords to inquire into the present condition of the West India colonies, and into the state of the laws affecting the slaves, His Majesty's Government have felt it their duty to defer acting upon the intention announced in my former circular of 10th December 1831, and that no further steps will at present be taken for the purpose of inducing the Colonial Legislatures to adopt the provisions of the Order in Council of the 2d November.

When His Majesty's Government first perceived that they might probably be compelled to postpone their general design, they lost no time in considering the mode by which they might, in the meantime, give special relief to the Crown Colonies without affecting the interests of the others; nor does there appear to be any serious

12 May 1832.

Printed in Papers  
presented to Parlia-  
ment on the 15  
March 1832.

serious difficulty in finding a fit mode of affording provisionally such an amount of relief as may be commensurate with the occasion.

His Majesty's Government have accordingly resolved to apply to Parliament for power to grant to the treasuries of the Crown Colonies, when it shall appear to their satisfaction that the Order in Council is in full operation, such sums of money respectively as shall be equal in each case to one moiety of the amount of the annual public revenue of each; and it will be left to the Governor and Council in the cases of Trinidad and St. Lucia, and to the Governor and Court of Policy in the case of British Guiana, to select for the approval of His Majesty's Government the particular taxes the levy of which may be most properly remitted for this year, with a view of affording the intended relief.

You will of course understand that the relief thus proposed to be afforded to the Crown Colonies is merely provisional, and that it is intended hereafter to be exchanged for advantages of a more permanent character; but His Majesty's Government could not suffer even the year to elapse without taking measures for providing substantial relief for the current period.

I trust that before you receive this despatch the excitement occasioned by the first promulgation of the Order in Council may have subsided, and that both slaves and masters having learned their mutual rights and duties will act accordingly. Of course, should it be necessary, you will not fail to make use of all the powers with which you are invested for the enforcement of the law; and while on the one hand you secure to the slaves the full enjoyment of those advantages which His Majesty has graciously been pleased to confer upon them, you will, on the other, repress every attempt on their part to abuse the privileges which have been granted to them, and cause the authority of the master to be respected and his lawful commands to be obeyed.

It has already been publicly announced, that His Majesty's Government will be most ready to consider whatever suggestions can be made for the removal of any inconvenience which may be found to result from particular provisions of the Order in Council; but although this disposition continues unaltered, and although I shall be most happy to receive any information which may assist me in forming a judgment as to the improvements of which the law, as it now stands, is susceptible, the appointment which has taken place of Committees of the two Houses of Parliament will necessarily prevent any of the contemplated modifications from being carried into effect, until it shall appear what may be the result of that inquiry. Frequent changes of the law with respect to slavery are most justly objected to, as calculated to unsettle the minds of the negroes, and to cause unreasonable expectations and discontent. And, indeed, were the reasons for abstaining from present alteration less cogent than they obviously are on this score, it could scarcely be expected that a law framed with so much previous investigation, and with such elaborate care and circumspection, should be altered on any other ground than that of practical evils found by experience to result from it, after it should have been for a sufficient time in full and fair operation.

I have the less difficulty in postponing any modifications of the Order in Council, because, if I am not mistaken in supposing that the clauses most objected to are those which regulate the duration of manufacturing labour, and the supply of food and clothing, I think it may be found practicable to meet a part at least of those objections, by removing some misconceptions which appear to prevail as to its real state and effect.

It has been urged that the restrictions on manufacturing labour will be attended with the absolute ruin of the plantations; and it appears to be taken for granted that the law has forbidden slave-labour beyond the prescribed hours, even with the consent of the slave himself. There is nothing, however, in the Order to justify this construction, but much which seems to me directly opposed to it; for the words of the 90th clause are, that "No slave shall be *compelled* or *bound*" to perform any labour beyond the prescribed hours; and the penalty is denounced in the 96th clause against owners who shall "*compel* or *require*" any slave to perform any such extra labour. All, therefore, that is prohibited is *compulsory* labour beyond the prescribed hours.

But it is further assumed, that the slaves will not voluntarily engage in extra labour for hire. This assertion has been often made, and wherever the experiment has been fairly tried, so far as my information extends, has been as often refuted. Thus the works of the engineer department were executed at Berbice, and the Lieutenant-governor's residence there was built, by the voluntary labour of hired slaves;

slaves ; and the Crown negroes in British Guiana, who have recently been made free, have, since their liberation, employed themselves in working for wages under the commanding-officer of engineers. From the Bahamas also several cases are reported by the Governor, of the exertion of the utmost industry by persons of the same class, when stimulated by the hope of wages ; and in the last collection of papers on the subject of slavery, which were presented to Parliament on the 15th March last, will be found at page 76, a Report from Surtees, the protector of slaves in St. Lucia, which proves from the Custom-house Returns that, from the 5th January 1831 to 5th January 1832, upwards of 1,092 tons of logwood were exported from the port of Castries on account of slaves, being the produce of their voluntary labour during the days and hours secured to them by law.

A more plausible objection might perhaps be founded upon the danger, that in making such a contract with the owner the slave would be a free agent in name only. That, however, is a risk against which security might be found in the vigilance of the protectors, and in the clear apprehension of their own rights which the slaves may be expected to acquire. The advantages of introducing such a system would, on the other hand, be of the highest moment ; it might pave the way for a more general substitution of hired service for forced labour ; and a slave who during part of the year had been accustomed to work two or three hours daily for wages, would be rapidly preparing for the transition into the condition of a free labourer.

These views are not founded on mere theory. I learn from most respectable authority, that since the promulgation of the Order in Trinidad, the practice has already commenced in that island of hiring slaves to work in crop time at extra hours, for an increased allowance of food ; and the extension of the same practice to British Guiana and St. Lucia, may not improbably remove the obstacle which the Order is said to have raised to the completion of the manufacturing process, with great and permanent advantage to all parties concerned.

Great objections have been raised to the regulations of the Order respecting provisions. At a meeting of planters and others, held at St. Lucia on the 4th of January last, it was unanimously resolved, " That the Order compels the owner to furnish his labourers daily with double the quantity of provisions supplied to the King's troops, and to give them clothing such as their masters are, in many instances, themselves destitute of." On the other hand, the letter transmitted by the Governor of Trinidad, written by the Chairman of the Committee of that island, on the 31st December last, contains the following passage : " No planter who values the health or the comfort of his negroes, would substitute the less plentiful, less nutritive, less wholesome, and far more economical food provided by law, for the expensive allowance which they may now receive." Thus the very same regulation which is condemned as profuse and extravagant in St. Lucia, is not less loudly condemned as penurious in Trinidad. Nor can it be asserted that this contradiction arises from any local distinctions, which would render the same food dear and nutritious in the one island, and cheap and ill-adapted for nutriment in the other ; for in both the Governor has the power of making such substitutions for the prescribed allowances as the exigencies of the colony may require, provided that the support of the slave be not thereby diminished. To this regulation, and to the rule which enables the owner himself, with the written authority of the protector, to make a similar substitution in respect to clothing, I should apprehend that adequate attention has not hitherto been given. These provisions, however, would seem to afford a sufficient answer to the more prominent of the objections which have been usually urged against the Order in Council ; and I am to desire that you would immediately apply your mind to the consideration of the question, what substitutions of food and clothing can be authorized to the common advantage of the proprietor and the slave.

You will avail yourself of the advice of the members of the legislative body of the colony under your government, in forming your decision upon this subject ; although that decision must at last be adopted on your own responsibility, and must, under the Order in Council, be promulgated as originating with yourself alone. If any owner should wish to provide for the maintenance of his slaves partly by an allowance of food, and partly by granting time, it would be in his power, as I have already shown, to make any contract of that nature with the slaves, paying them in an increased amount of food for the voluntary surrender of any part of their leisure hours. In short, I am persuaded that whenever this Order in

in Council shall be studied with that calm and impartial attention which in the first heat of the moment it may not have received, it will be found that many of the difficulties on which its opponents have most insisted, had been obviated by anticipation in the structure of the law itself.

I have, &c.

(signed) GODERICH.

— No. 3. —

Circular DESPATCH from Viscount *Goderich* to the Governors of the *West Indian* Legislative Colonies.

Sir,

Downing-street, 9 June 1832.

IN consequence of the circumstances alluded to in my circular of the 19th ultimo, you will only receive by the present mail my despatch dated 12th May, in which I have had the honour of informing you that a Committee has been appointed by the House of Lords for the purpose of inquiring into the actual condition of the slaves in the British colonies. Since that despatch was written, the existing relations between the owner and the slave have likewise been referred to the investigation of a Committee of the House of Commons. But although the same subject has thus been submitted to Committees of both Houses, there is a difference in the manner in which the reference has been made in the two cases. The Committee of the House of Lords was appointed on the petition of the merchants and others interested in the West Indian property, and has been instructed to investigate the actual condition of the slave population, and the state of the law by which their treatment is regulated: the Committee of the House of Commons, on the other hand, has been appointed in consequence of the numerous petitions which have been presented for the abolition of slavery; and has been directed to consider and report upon the measures which it may be expedient to adopt, for the purpose of effecting the extinction of slavery throughout the British dominions, at the earliest period compatible with the safety of all classes in the colonies, and in conformity with the Resolutions of this House on the 15th May 1823. Some alarm has been expressed by persons connected with the colonies lest this vote of the House of Commons should tend to an erroneous impression on the minds of the slaves, that they have actually been declared free, and lest this notion, and the disappointment which it must necessarily meet with, should produce acts of insubordination and violence. I certainly do not participate in this alarm. It is indeed, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, deeply to be regretted that the measure which they had proposed for the improvement of the condition of the slaves has not met with the cheerful concurrence of the colonists, since it seems to them that by affording a remedy for the worst of the practical evils of the present system, by holding out a prospect that the slaves might be able gradually to purchase their freedom, the cordial adoption of the Order in Council of the 2d of November might have been accepted as a settlement of the question. But as the opposition which has been raised both in this country and in the colonies has had the effect of preventing the views of the Government from being carried into effect, a Parliamentary inquiry appears to be the best mode of surmounting the difficulties which this opposition has created; nor do I see any reason to suppose, that if the slaves should become acquainted with the terms of the resolution by which the Committee of the House of Commons has been appointed, they will so far misapprehend its real object, as to conceive that their immediate and unconditional emancipation has been ordered. On the contrary, I should entertain a sanguine hope, that if any unusual discontent and irritation has been created amongst them by the late discussions, and by the opposition which has been made to the measures intended for their relief, nothing could so much tend to allay these feelings, and to induce them to wait with patience the promised improvement in their condition, as the certainty that the Imperial Parliament is now engaged in an inquiry into the best and speediest mode of effecting that object to which it has so long been pledged. There is indeed one, and only one contingency, in which I think there would be just grounds for the fears which have been expressed.



expressed. If the owners of slaves should suffer themselves to give way to unfounded and exaggerated apprehensions, if they should indulge in violent and intemperate language, there would be but too great a probability that the slaves, forming their notions of what they have to expect from the alarm expressed by their masters, might be led to indulge in extravagant hopes ; and that they might understand as literally true those complaints of total confiscation of property, which, under the influence of feelings of undue, though not perhaps unnatural excitement, have sometimes been made with a view to their effect in this country, and without sufficient consideration of their extreme danger. I trust that the fatal proof which recent experience has afforded of the reality of this danger will serve as a warning to the colonists of \_\_\_\_\_ and prevent any such conduct on their part as may lead to a possible misconception, on the part of the slaves, of that which has taken place in Parliament. It will, of course, be your study to impress upon all classes within your government a just sense of the position in which they are placed, and of the duties which it imposes upon them. To the planters you will explain, that the vote of the House of Commons implies no departure from the principles sanctioned by the Resolutions of 1823 ; that no violent change in the existing form of society is contemplated, but that, on the contrary, the object to which the labours of the Committee will be directed, will be, that which Parliament has always recognized as the end to be aimed at, in all that has been done on this subject, namely, the substitution, as soon as it can be effected without any shock or convulsion, of a system of *free* for one of *forced* labour. To the slaves, on the other hand, you will give the assurance of His Majesty's most earnest solicitude for their welfare ; but you will explain to them, that any attempt on their part to wrest by force from their masters advantages to which they have no legal claim, can have no other effect than to draw down upon them the severest punishment, and to postpone the accomplishment of that which is intended for their benefit. Your personally visiting the principal estates in the colony, and speaking to the most intelligent of the slaves, would perhaps be the surest and most effectual means of removing any false impression which they may have received, and of making them understand their real situation. I rely with confidence upon your vigilance and activity for the adoption of this or any other precaution which circumstances may seem to require.

I have, &c.

(signed) GODERICH.

— No. 4. —

Circular DESPATCH from Viscount *Goderich* to the Governors of the *West Indian* Crown Colonies.

Sir,

Downing-street, 11 June 1832.

IN reference to my despatch of the 13th May, enclosing copy of a circular letter addressed to the Governors of the West India colonies having Legislative Assemblies, I have now the honour to transmit to you the copy of another circular, addressed to those Governors, in consequence of the House of Commons having (as well as the House of Lords) appointed a Committee upon West India affairs. The enclosed despatch will explain to you the views of His Majesty's Government upon the subject of the appointment of this Committee.

I have, &c.

(signed) GODERICH.

## — No. 5.—

STATEMENT of the Amount of REVENUES arising from Colonial Taxes and Duties in the Islands of *Trinidad* and *St. Lucia*, and in the Settlements of *British Guiana*, in the latest Years for which Returns have been received.

	£.	s.	d.
Trinidad - - - - -	37,761	4	7
St. Lucia - - - - -	12,531	3	8
British Guiana - - - - -	65,332	6	2
£.	115,624	14	5

SLAVE POPULATION.

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P A P E R S

Presented to Parliament, by His Majesty's Command,

In Explanation of the Measures adopted by His Majesty's Government for the Melioration of the Condition of the Slave POPULATION in His Majesty's Possessions in the *West Indies* and on the Continent of *South America*.

[*In further continuation of the Papers presented in March 1832.*]

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1832.

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Ordered, by The House of Commons, to be Printed,  
27 July 1832.

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