**ADJUSTMENTS TO EMANCIPATION 1838- 1876**

***Emancipated Life and Problems Affecting the Sugar Industry***

The period of Apprenticeship ended prematurely on August 1, 1838.  The planters had a lot of adjustments to make.

**1.** They now had to enter in a new relationship or arrangement with the emancipated people.

**2.** They would have to pay full time if they wanted labor on their estates. According to Ashdown and Humphreys, (Caribbean Revision History for CXC) after emancipation wages accounted for two thirds of the total cost of the production of sugar.

**3.** They would have to finally face the fact that the labourer was free to choose who he or she wanted to work for.

**4.** Because of the negative and spiteful attitude towards the apprentices many of them did not want to return to the estates to work. The planters therefore faced a labor problem. In some cases, it was shortage of labour. In other instances, it was a case of the labor being unreliable or too expensive

**5.** Emancipation also highlighted the need to use machinery on the estates.  
But there were other challenges as well. By 1838, competition from beet sugar and cane sugar from Cuba and Brazil increased. In 1846, Britain equalized the duties on foreign grown sugar so that all sugar entering her ports paid the same amount of duties.

6. The little ‘cushion' that the British West Indian planters depended on was removed. That compounded the credit crisis that they were already facing. A number of them were staring bankruptcy in the face. By 1854, a number of them were overburdened with debt and forced out of production. Jamaica and Grenada had the highest number of abandoned estates.

7. In the older colonies such as Jamaica, Barbados and Antigua the planters were battling with infertile and tired soils. Soil exhaustion leads to poor quality yields in a market where better quality sugar was readily available.

8. Some of the planters tried items of machinery such as the centrifugal systems the plough, harrow and vacuum pans. Others introduced the railways. Trinidad, British Guiana and St. Kitts introduced steam mills.

9. The planters in the Windward Islands of St. Lucia and Grenada in particular tried the system of sharecropping. The majority though still believed in the old way of production using manual labour. They managed to convince England to allow them to import immigrant labour.

10. A number of them clung to the ‘griping method.' They complained to England hoping to get some help: Select Committee of 1842 and 1848. Others opposed the establishment of Free Villages and the Peasantry. As usual they ranted and raved against the Non-Conformist missionaries and tried to block their effectiveness.

**Attitudes to Labour in the English- speaking Caribbean after 1838**

The newly emancipated people also had some adjusting to do:

**1.** They had to find their own food, clothing and shelter. They could either make arrangements with their former owner or establish independent settlements. Where possible, they much preferred the latter.

**2.** They had to learn and exercise the rules governing bargaining of labour.

**3.** They had to address the issue of education, health as well as their legal and political rights. Needless to say the colonial authorities were not in a hurry to include them in the political process or to change the laws to reflect their new status. As Governor Harris of Trinidad noted: " A race has been freed but a society has not been formed."

**4.** The planters shifted the burden of taxation to the newly emancipated people.

***Immigration in the British Caribbean (1838- 1917)***

**THE EUROPEANS**

Due to a decline in the white population, planters sought European immigrants to increase the size of the white population. It was hoped that Europeans would set an example of industry to ex-slaves and eventually develop into a middle class. They would settle on available land in the interior, thus forcing ex-slaves off the land and back to the plantations. Jamaica imported the largest number. Europeans also went to Trinidad, British Guiana and St Kitts. These immigrants were mainly Scots, Irish, French and Germans. They were recruited under a bounty system.

**Problems with European immigration**

Europeans were unsatisfactory as most died soon after they arrived. They died from tropical diseases, heat stroke and many drank themselves to death. They also refused to work on the plantations with blacks. Many asked to be sent home or migrated to the United States. Planters also failed to supply proper food, shelter and medical facilities.

**THE PORTUGUESE**

Madeirans were paid only 3d per day in Madeira and were attracted by higher wages in the Caribbean, especially in British Guiana. Many went to Trinidad and a few to the Windward Islands. They were brought in by government bounty. Most came during periods of famine in Madeira (1846-1847). Their numbers decreased after 1847 until the scheme ended in 1882.

**Problems with Madeiran immigration**

The Madeirans died in large numbers. They suffered severely from yellow fever, malaria, overwork and inadequate food. The scheme was very irregular and most of them went into trading as soon as their contracts ended. In addition, because so many of its citizens were leaving, the Madeiran government objected to the scheme and implemented measures to make it difficult for them to be recruited.

**THE AFRICANS**

There were two distinct groups of Africans that were used as labourers in the post-emancipation period. These were the free Africans and the liberated Africans. The free Africans were persons who willingly opted to come and work on the plantations in the Caribbean. The liberated Africans were persons freed by British naval personnel from vessels illegally transporting them to the Caribbean as slaves.

Free Africans

Attempts were made to obtain Africans from the Kru Coast and Sierra Leone. The British government was reluctant to grant approval of this scheme as it seemed to be a revival of the slave trade. However, in 1840, approval was granted. At first they were recruited privately but the British government assumed direct control two years later.

**Problems**

1. Very few Africans were willing to come to the Caribbean. There were no catastrophes in

Africa which would make them leave.

2. Many who came to the Caribbean did not remain on the plantation; rather they followed

the ex-slaves and settled on lands and became peasant farmers.

Liberated Africans

The largest number of Africans who came to the British Caribbean were 'rescued' by the British Navy from slave ships bound for Cuba and Brazil. These Africans were forcibly indentured for up to five years in the Caribbean, primarily in British Guiana, Trinidad and Jamaica.

**Problems**

1. The number of liberated Africans was too small to make a difference to the labour

situation. This scheme ended when Cuba and Brazil abolished slavery in 1866 and 1888,

respectively. Like the ex-slaves, they abandoned the estates and settled on land.

**THE CHINESE**

The first Chinese immigrants arrived in Trinidad in 1806 from Malaya. They were to be indentured for five years, with a promise of small plots of land afterwards. They were extremely unsuitable as estate labourers, and most were shipped back. Most Chinese immigrants came during the period 1859-1886 and went to British Guiana, Jamaica and Trinidad. They came mostly from the Portuguese colony of Macao and from Canton. Others came as well because of the Teiping Rebellion (1851-1864).

**Problems with Chinese immigration**

Planters complained that the Chinese did not make good estate workers. A few re-indentured themselves. They preferred to return to China or open retail shops. In addition, they were more expensive than the Indians. The Chinese government insisted that a full return passage be granted after a five-year indenture contract, but the planters were willing to pay this only after two five-year contracts.

The Chinese government also opposed immigration because the Chinese were ill-treated in Cuba. Most Chinese avoided the West Indies, preferring to go to the United States or to find work nearer to home in Java or the Philippines. Finally, race relations between blacks and Chinese were quite poor.

**THE EAST INDIANS**

The first Indians arrived in 1838 on Gladstone's Estate in British Guiana. However, the British government stopped the scheme because of evidence of ill-treatment and the high death rate among the immigrants in Mauritius. However, due to pressure from the planters, the British reopened the Indian immigration scheme in 1844.

It was not difficult to find willing immigrants. Many craftsmen had lost their jobs due to competition from the mechanised factories and mills of England. Also, India was becoming overpopulated and there was not enough land to divide among the younger generation. In addition, wages in India had fallen to 1/2d per day and there was a series of famine during the period 1857-1877 that led to an increase in food prices. Those seeking to escape the police and the caste system were also willing to migrate.

The Caribbean seemed attractive with high wages, shelter, medical care and a chance to find new occupations beside agriculture. Indians were easily recruited as India was a British colony. British ships and trading posts were already there, and the British government could easily provide British officials to supervise the scheme. Planters were satisfied with the Indians because they were hardworking, accustomed to tropical agriculture and they re-indentured themselves.

***The impact of Immigration on Caribbean Society and Culture***

**ECONOMIC EFFECT ON THE SUGAR INDUSTRY**

**1.** There was an increase in the supply of labour. Their coming definitely solved the labour shortage problem.

**2.** There was a decrease in the wages offered to workers on the estates. This helped to cut the cost of production dramatically since wages was two thirds of the cost of production.

**4.** Sugar production increased particularly in Trinidad and British Guiana.

**5.** A number of immigrants remained and worked on the estates after their contract expired. They did both skilled and unskilled jobs.

**6.** It is said that the Indian immigrants encouraged the use of mechanization.

British West Indian planters had turned to immigration as a tool for reviving the sugar industry. The hope was that with the steady supply of labour, planters could focus on increasing their output. Immigration, however, did not have its desired impact, especially in a colony as Jamaica. In territories such as Trinidad and British Guiana, we cannot assume that immigration saved their sugar industry. For instance, they introduced mechanisation and placed more lands under sugar cane cultivation. These other factors could readily be counted as factors that saved their sugar industries. Barbados could be used as another example. Up to 1848, they had seen an increase in their output by 250 per cent. However, by the end of the 19th century, this had declined. We cannot assume that it was because Barbados was not using immigrant labour that its output declined. During the period, Barbados was plagued by problems such as soil exhaustion and inadequate mechanisation.

The overall conclusion must be that immigration did not cause increased sugar production in the British West Indies, as many other factors could have been responsible.

**SOCIAL EFFECTS**

1. Indians were felt to be inferior and they could only find work in poorly paid jobs. They could not settle in the towns, but lived in the countryside and formed an active peasant class. The employment of Indians mainly as field workers led to the employment of blacks in better jobs, for example, the police force.

2. The ex-slaves despised the Indians and refused to work alongside them in the fields. They were described as 'heathens' because of their speech and clothing. Indians also despised the blacks because of their alleged low moral standards.

3. Immigration led to the expansion of social services, for example, medical facilities and a large police force.

**CULTURAL EFFECTS**

***1. Family -*** Indians brought their firm family structure in which all relations supported each other. The idea of extended family, which included several generations, was very strong. All males over 16 years were members of a family council. They made all decisions of the family, for example, marriage, religious ceremonies and expenditure.

***2. Religion - Hinduism*** - Hindus worshipped several gods of which Brahma was the most important. He was the supreme god or creator. They believed that when people die, their souls are reborn in a new body. The Hindus had very strict divisions in the society; this was known as the caste system. Each person belonged to a special group or caste. The Brahmins or the religious leaders were at the top of the society and the Hindus in the Caribbean continued to follow them as their leaders.

***Islam -*** The Indians who came were also Muslims. They believed in one God, called Allah. They followed the teachings of the Quran.

***3. Festivals -*** Divali or Festival of lights was celebrated by the Hindus. They told stories, shared gifts and decorated their windows and doors with lights and candles.

***Hosein -*** A Muslim festival. Small temples, made from paper and bamboo, were decorated and carried in a procession through the streets, while there was dancing to the beats of drums.

4. The Indians normally segregated themselves deliberately in the educational institution. Oftentimes, they were unwilling to send their children to school, since they feared they would be converted to Christianity. It was not until the late 1870s when separate schools for Indian children were established, mainly by the Canadian Presbyterian Mission to the Indians, that Indian children went to school and language barriers began to crumble. Indian integration in the Caribbean was not very easy, since many of them spoke the Hindi language and this served as a language barrier.

***The Free Village Movement***

**Introduction**

The drift of ex-slaves from the plantation can be found in the ex-slaves’ desire to establish himself in a social and economic context free from the demands of the plantation. The desire for independence drove ex- slaves away from the plantations and led to the village movement.

No matter how many blacks became small landowners they could not resist the oppressive system unless they cooperated as a group. This was why the formation of free villages became so important. Free villages developed when ex- slaves moved off the plantation and settled themselves in ‘’free villages’’.

Some free villages were established before emancipation by run- away slaves in the forests of Guyana and the mountains of Jamaica and were known as **maroon settlements**.

The formation of free villages happened quite rapidly in the British Caribbean. In Jamaica, the first free village called Sligoville (named after Marquess of Sligo) was established by a Baptist minister named James Phillipo just one year after emancipation which catered to 100 families when emancipation was declared. The second free village was established in 1838 through the efforts of and English Minister named William Knibb. The village was named Sturge Town and was established on land bought by the Anglican Church.

**Factors which determined the establishment of free villages**

A number of factors were attributed to the development of free villages within the British Caribbean after emancipation.

1. Places like British Guiana, Trinidad and Jamaica had much unused land available and because of this the development of free villages was possible, while in smaller territories such as St. Kitts, Barbados and Antigua and so on, little land was available which resulted in the development of fewer free villages.
2. The ex- slaves had a desire to be free and to own a piece of land. They associated work on estates with slavery, so they wanted to be independent of the estates. In addition, owning a piece of land was the key to independence.
3. The former slaves disliked plantation labour and they wanted to forget the bad treatment that had been meted out under slavery.
4. There were some governors who encouraged the movement away from the plantation. A good example was Governor Colebrook of Antigua in 1837. On the other hand, there were also governors who legislated against the growth of cooperative estates. For example, in British Guiana.
5. The ex- slaves’ familiarity with agriculture helped to pave the way for the establishment of free villages. During slavery, slave owners who had available land provided their slaves with provision grounds on which they grew food crops. Slave owners had also developed the practice of allowing slaves to sell any surplus in the Sunday market. When freedom came the ex- slaves wanted to devote as much time as they chose to the growing and marketing of provisions from which they could make a living.
6. Some ex-slaves squatted on unused land and disregarded official warnings to desist from such practice, because they knew that it was difficult for them to be brought to justice.
7. Some landowners were willing to sell some of their land in order to ease their financial problems, for example to raise money to pay wages or to clear off longstanding debts.
8. Many ex-slaves were able to use their savings to purchase land at prices ranging from two pounds to ten pounds per acre.
9. In British Guiana, ex- slaves pooled their resources, obtained limited credit and purchased large territories of land from estate owners. Victoria, Queenstown, Plaisance and Beterverwagting were some of the villages which they established. By 1852, it was estimated that there were more than 70, 000 ex- slaves owning property in houses and land for which they had paid one million pounds.
10. Baptist and Wesleyan missionaries for example William Knibb, James Phillipo and Thomas Burchell in Jamaica who wanted to protect the ex- slaves from the abuses of the planters, established free villages such as Sligoville, Sturge Town, Clarkson, Clarksonville, Wilberforce, Boston, Bethany, Salem, Philadelphia and Harmony, where ex- slaves were able to purchase small lots of land.
11. The generosity of some planters also contributed to the establishment of free villages. In Barbados Reynold Alleyne Ellcock, the owner of Mt. Wilton Estate in St. Thomas, left money in his will to teach his slaves. After his death, they received this money in 1841 and together, they bought sections of Rock Hall Estate to establish free villages.
12. A few planters for example Peter Chapman, owner of Workman’s Estate in St. George made land available for sale. In 1856, he subdivided 102 acres of his estate and allowed ex- slaves to purchase lots in installments.

**Effects of free villages on the supply of labour on the British Caribbean sugar estates**

The development of free villages in various colonies in the British Caribbean had a profound effect on the labour supply on the sugar estates.

1. Free villages greatly reduced the number of full- time labourers on plantations.
2. Free villages reduced the labour supply on sugar plantations which created a labour shortage in some islands particularly in the larger territories like Jamaica, Trinidad and British Guiana which further resulted in the decline in production of sugar.
3. Free villages reduced the number of male artisans and craftsmen on the plantations.
4. Free villages resulted in planters having to seek alternative labour supply for the estates which inevitably resulted in indentured immigration.

***The African- Caribbean Peasantry in the Post- Emancipation Period in the British Caribbean***

A fundamental development during the post emancipation period was the movement away from the estates by ex- slaves mostly to set themselves up as peasant proprietors. Indeed, many ex- slaves struggled to make a life for themselves and to etch out some form of existence for themselves and their families in a society that still had many of the prejudices of the pre- emancipation era.

One of the many problems facing the ex- slaves after emancipation which still prevented them from enjoying full equality with members of the planter class was the difficulty in obtaining land to set themselves up as independent small farmers. Many ex- slaves desired to become independent small farmers but this could only happen if the ex- slaves acquired their own land. Such a life would give them the security of personal liberty and landownership, enabling them to escape the high rents and the low wages or in some cases the metayage system.

Despite the fact that the colonial governments made it difficult for the ex- slaves to own Crown lands (in an attempt to keep them bound to the estates and ensure continued production of sugar), some ex- slaves were able to become peasants.

1. Some ex- slaves set themselves up most easily where unoccupied land was most available. As the fall in sugar prices hit the estates land values fell and some estates were abandoned. By pooling their money together ex- slaves could buy these abandoned estates and then subdivide the and into plots of two, three or more acres.
2. Ex- slaves acquired land through the help of Baptist missionaries who helped to bargain with landowners and provided funds so that peasants could set themselves up in farming villages. This also acted as an incentive to the ex- slaves to convert to Christianity and to become members of the Christian Church.
3. Peasants who could not buy land squatted on unused Crown lands in the hills. By living on these plots long enough they came into possession of the land.

Despite their success in acquiring land peasants still encountered a number of obstacles in acquiring land to establish peasant plots.

1. For one thing peasants were not free of official interference. Licenses and land taxes were imposed and small landholders had to follow numerous regulations or deal with interfering planters nearby. There were still many peasants who were unable to buy plots because plantations were so tied up in debt and uncertainty of ownership that they lay unused and unsold while the peasantry was desperately in need to land. At times there were violent protest when peasants felt they were being unfairly treated for example the peasant revolt led by Paul Boggle at Morant Bay in 1865.
2. There were problems with the acquisition of land due to high rents, lack of Crown Land and planters’ reluctance to sell land.
3. Planters charged high rents on and the peasants could not afford these.
4. Planters used legislation, such as the Squatters’ Act and the Tenancy Act, to make it difficult for peasants to acquire land.

A number of crops were planted on a large scale by this emerging peasant population. These were cash crops grown for sale in the local markets and subsistence crops grown to be eaten by the peasant family. Peasants used every piece of land however steep or stony to grow ground provisions, fruits and vegetables. Livestock ranged from cattle to sheep, goats, pigs and poultry. Cash crops included, tobacco, bananas, spices, cocoa, coffee, coconuts and some sugar cane. The increase of these crops helped to change the pattern of agriculture in the Caribbean leading to what was called the Agricultural Diversification.

1. Individual peasant holdings normally comprised:

* Marginal, un- cleared and un- surveyed land
* Land that was usually located far from the markets where goods were sold

1. Peasant holdings were normally a half acre to two acres
2. The land was usually used for:

* Growing provisions, fruits and vegetables
* Rearing livestock such as cattle, sheep, goats, pigs and poultry

1. Peasants normally practiced subsistence agriculture where sufficient crops were grown to feed the family.
2. Some peasants supplemented their income by working part- time on the estates for wages.

The peasantry developed in every British Caribbean island to a lesser or greater extent. The islands grew the same crops. However, only a few emerged as leaders such as Jamaica. Jamaica had adequate shipping arrangements as well as enough peasants and plantations supplying banana for export figure for this fruit continued to rise in the early 1900s and it was established as a major industry. The island of Barbados was still fairly concentrated on sugar. Trinidad and St. Kitts did not put so much acreage into those other crops for several reasons. The islands’ sizes as well as the smaller size of their peasantry were also deterrents.

Sidney Mintz shows that the cultivation of provision grounds came to be seen by slaves as a customary right and that the experience of this ‘’proto- peasantry’’ in producing and marketing crops and livestock was an important aspect of their transition to emancipation. After slavery, the rise of the peasantries constituted some kind of resistance response to the dominant plantation system and for many reasons the former slaves valued peasant farming for their independence.

***Adoption of Crown Colony Government in the British Caribbean in the 19th century***

We have already pointed out that very little provisions were made for the newly emancipated people. No public health system or housing scheme was put in place to accommodate them. The laws did not address the matter of their legal and voting rights. It was the Missionaries who gave them guidance and support in these unfamiliar areas.

All of these problems and more led the peasants in St. Vincent (1862) and Jamaica (1865) and Barbados (1876) to stage a rebellion in their respective territory.

The government felt that it had done enough. It had partnered with the Churches in providing elementary education for the masses. For ten years through the Negro Education grant, it helped to finance education. From 1835 to 1840 it provided an annual sum of thirty thousand pounds to help finance education. The amount decreased gradually for the next five years until it ceased in 1845.

In addition, they took the initiative to use the **Mico Trust Charity Fund** of £120,000, to open a number of schools. These were operated by religious bodies in colonies such as Jamaica, St. Lucia, Dominica and Trinidad. By 1841, just three years after emancipation there were about 196 schools throughout the British Caribbean with a school population of about 1,500. Government inspectors were appointed and commissioned to supervise the education system.

The truth is that after this very little was done. Once the Imperial Government withdrew or ceased funding, the local government authorities refused to vote any significant amount of money for education of the masses. It was in their best interest to keep the masses ignorant. It would ensure labor for their estates and enterprises and secure their class from any the entrance of any lower class people. Primary education was not seen as necessary or compulsory (except in British Guiana). How then could the masses reach any further?

The authorities had the same attitude towards public health and housing. The Old Representative System of government was anything but representative. The composition of it was mainly plantocrats and upper class whites with a few colored members. These people did not care about the suffering of the masses.

The 1850's and 1860's brought further distress on the already frustrated masses:

* Cholera epidemic claimed the lives of thousands and left many children orphaned and families without the main breadwinner (income earner).
* 1861-1865 was the American Civil War. This meant that essential food supply- flour and saltfish- was not available. The shortage of food sent the prices ‘sky high'. Bread and flour went up by as much as 83%!
* 1863-1865 were years of drought and other natural disasters

No relief was provided. What followed next is a prime example of how the Representative government dealt with the demands of the freed people.

The people in the parish of St. Ann, Jamaica, sent a petition to the Queen Victoria. She sent an unkind reply. She advised them to work hard for whatever wages they were offered and find ways to help themselves. What an insult! The biased and racist governor Eyre loved the response. It seemed to give him approval for his draconian way of dealing with the masses that he treated with open disdain. He published thousands of copies, held public readings of them and had them posted all over different towns.

He treated **Paul Bogle** with open disdain. The peasants from St. Thomas dared to seek audience with him. He had no time to listen to the grievances of peasants. It did not matter to him that Bogle and his marching band had walked more than sixty miles to see him! They returned to Morant Bay in St. Thomas were only a few days later the **Morant Bay Rebellion** led by Bogle erupted.

The governor quickly proclaimed martial law. As usual their first response was force and repression! The militia was called out to suppress the rebellion. Ringleaders were caught, brutally and publicly flogged and then hung.

This forced the Imperial government to change its response. It effected a change from the Old Representative System to Crown Colony government. All colonies **EXCEPT BARBADOS** instituted this new form of government. It was more responsive to the needs of the public but the attitude of control and superiority was basically the same.  
  
**Reforms of Crown Colony Government**

* Public works: roads, bridges etc.
* Police Force
* District Courts
* Social services: Boards of Health, Government Hospitals constructed