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SCHOLARSHIP OR SOLIDARITY?
THE POST-EMANCIPATION ERA IN THE
CARIBBEAN RECONSIDERED¹

From a reading of Michael Craton's (1994) recent contribution to this journal on slave emancipation in the Bahamas, one is struck by two things. First, we have come a long way in the historical study of slavery compared with the analysis of the post-emancipation period. Over the past thirty years we have amassed a mountain of materials covering virtually all aspects of the system of slavery. As a consequence we have been able to reach a large degree of consensus on slavery in the U.S. South, the Caribbean, and Brazil. Of course, certain differences of interpretation remain. For example, we still have not solved all the riddles on issues such as the demographic decline of the slave populations in the tropical regions of the New World or the survival of African norms and values in these parts.

The second conclusion which can be reached from Craton's article is that the recent findings on the history of slavery have as yet not had much impact on our interpretation of the post-emancipation period. Unfortunately, this is a serious problem since the period after slavery in the Caribbean (or in Northeastern Brazil for that matter) is difficult to document. Those who could write or had to write, such as colonial civil servants and the planters, gave much less attention to the freedmen than they had devoted to the slaves. In documentary terms the exception was the period of apprenticeship in the British and Dutch Caribbean, when elaborate reports were filed in order to inform the respective parliaments about the impact of their various rules and regulations governing the period of transition. Because of the lack of documentation we have not been able to discover what exactly happened to the ex-slaves once they had left the plantations.

Why did freedmen leave, and how can we describe their subsequent

cultural, demographic, and socio-economic development? In view of the dearth of data we have to rely on circumstantial evidence and common sense. Thus it is of the utmost importance to use our new insights into the nature of the Caribbean slave societies to test interpretations of these same societies during the period after slavery. Admittedly, this procedure will not entirely make up for the lack of information, but it will help us to ask more relevant questions. While we might be approaching the "end of history" in the historiography of slavery, Craton's interpretation of the post-emancipation period differs so widely from my own (Emmer 1992), that we certainly have not reached this point in writing about the subsequent period.

In many ways the historiography of the post-emancipation societies is still as heavily dominated by the ideology of the abolitionists as was once the case with the literature on slavery. The abolitionists perceived the post-emancipation period as a big disappointment. The planters' pessimistic predictions about a dramatic decline in the sugar output had proved to be realistic. Many ex-slaves had left the plantations and did not seem to develop into the hard-working, God abiding peasantry that Wilberforce had hoped for (Hind 1987). Unwilling to admit that the fault lay with the unrealistic assessments on their own part, the abolitionists blamed the planters as well as the colonial and home governments. In principle, the ending of the terrible and inefficient system of slavery should have produced progress on all fronts. That the freedmen should have experienced stagnation, or even decline, in their living and working conditions could only be caused by obstinacy or obstruction on the part of the planters and the colonial civil servants (Green 1985:183-202).

This traditional view had a long tenure. It continues to constitute the basis of Craton's analysis of the period of emancipation in the Bahamas. Since his case study brings in other parts of the Caribbean, his perspective can be fruitfully compared with the new historiography of slavery. I will not attempt to interpret the post-slavery period of the Bahamas in particular, as I lack the expertise that Craton has acquired during his long years of archival research on these islands. In addition, I will not expand too much time on some of Craton's broader concepts such as "proto-peasant" and "proto-proletarian." These terms are constructs that impede rather than increase our understanding of what happened. Craton himself seems to feel ill at ease in using these ahistoric abstractions.² There is no clear definition of these terms. On p. 24, slaves as well as freedmen could exhibit "features of both proto-peasants and proto-proletarian behavior." while on the next page Craton reduces the Caribbean social structure to two classes: capitalists and their workers. Yet, on page 27 we learn of still

another Caribbean social creature, the “part-proletarian” and “part-peasant” who constitutes a “breach” in the “slave mode of production,” or on p. 32 a “cash labor breach.” In addition, we encounter in quick succession “an effective proletariat,” a “true proletarian sector,” “would-be peasants,” “laboring classes,” people living “a pure peasant lifestyle,” and “squatters.” Fortunately for the reader, at the very end, the author leaves most of these self-imposed categories behind and returns to a two-class Caribbean society consisting of an “underclass” and “a capitalist bourgeoisie.” I will also use a simple two-part division by first analyzing the post-emancipation developments among the Caribbean elite, the employers, the colonial and metropolitan civil servants, and then the position of the freedmen and that of the indentured immigrant laborers.

THE ELITE

In the traditional historiography the planters are usually depicted as the *bêtes noires*. They are accused of clinging on to an old-fashioned and wasteful labor system, in which slaves are status symbols first and factors of production second. The new interpretation of slavery, however, has turned this view upside down. The planters appear to have been efficient managers of the most expansive economies at the time. It seems strange to imagine – as Craton does – that on the eve of emancipation the planters suddenly lost most of their managerial qualities: by trying to create an inefficient labor pool; by monopolizing all the land; charging rents for the use of cottages and garden plots; trying to create an “ideal” workforce consisting of a “minimal nucleus of faithful retainers throughout the year and for sufficient male laborers to be available when they were wanted” (p. 47); and exacting so much labor that the reproduction – let alone a natural increase – of the labor force was impossible (p. 27).

Unfortunately, none of these suppositions are accompanied by sufficient evidence. Indeed, on page 48, Craton himself destroys the myth that on the larger islands the planters could obtain rents for the use of cottages and customary grounds and that they could monopolize the land by emphasizing the large tracts of unoccupied land and the fact that: “In many cases, the planters did not even discourage squatting on lands they technically owned.” In the following pages of his article Craton again returns to the myth of “dear land” by pointing to the difficulty to squat on Crown lands (p. 56) and by drawing attention to the new and very strict vagrancy laws (p. 49). He fails to point out, however, that originally such vagrancy laws were designed to keep the poor in Europe in check, where there actually were means to enforce these laws (Rogers 1994). On

the larger Caribbean islands – as well as in the Guianas – these vagrancy laws were not enforceable. In order to support his own argument Craton would have had to provide figures indicating a gigantic increase in the size of the colonial police and army, but in reality such an increase never took place in the West Indies. Actually, relative to Western Europe the very modest size of the police and the army hardly changed after emancipation. The eviction of 45 squatters per year on Jamaica during the period 1869-1900 is extremely low in relation to an ex-slave population of more than 300,000 (p. 57). In sum, the logic of Craton's argument can be reversed: in comparison with the underclass in most parts of Europe the ex-slaves in the Caribbean had relatively ample access to land.

There is little doubt that the planters would have liked to possess all the power they have been credited with. This is particularly true regarding the slave demography. In this domain the omnipotence attributed to the planters seems to reach supernatural dimensions (p. 27). Craton actually seems to assume that the planters could throw the switch from negative to positive demographic growth by simply reducing the workload. The whole complicated riddle of the demographic performance of New World slave populations has been reduced to one simple cause: the malevolence of the planters! Of course, Craton knows full well that the workload was only one of the factors involved. Recent research tends to stress the importance of the constant influx of dangerous pathogens into the Caribbean disease environment, especially from West Africa. That would explain why slaves or ex-slaves in areas without many additional arrivals from elsewhere had decreasing mortality rates. In addition, the length of the lactation period, the diet, the sex ratio as well as medical care and – indeed – the type of crop and the workload also influenced mortality (Fogel 1989).

Craton's final arguments to prove the planters' urge to degrade their ex-slaves must also be analyzed here. In Craton's view the planters remained "despotic," "autocratic" and somehow unable to abandon their penchant for creating a loyal rather than an economical workforce. This view of the planters is not based on many of the relevant recent findings. First of all, Craton still seems to be reluctant to acknowledge that during several decades before emancipation the planters succeeded in carrying out a productivity revolution. He acknowledges that the slaves, by negotiating with the planters, had been able to obtain a substantial share of the new profits, but only a simultaneous rise in productivity can solve a puzzle which Craton cannot address. He notes (p. 31) that during the decades just prior to emancipation the slaves seemed to be performing less physical labor while, during the same period, substantial amounts of planter money

and time were spent on providing them with more food, and better housing and medical care (Ward 1988:190-232). The modern labor histories of Western Europe and North America, their evidence of long term rising wages and less work must be equally puzzling to Craton.

After emancipation, the planters continued to manage increases in the productivity of their plantations in order to combat rising labor costs and international competition. This caused the price of their cash crops to go down on the market for consumers. As Craton indicates the planters tried to apply their traditional successful formula by continuing to improve the milling and refining procedures. In addition, by using jobbing gangs the planters seemed to have invented another ingredient for their policy to minimize the amount of labor during the slack season. Had they been successful in this, they would have been imitating the management of agricultural labor in Europe at the time, where the workforce of the larger farms had a nucleus of permanent laborers aided by temporary migratory gangs during the harvest time (Hall 1959:157-58). In all this there is no indication whatsoever that the planters allowed themselves to ride their personal hobby horses by putting personal power, reliability or anything else above efficiency.

However, it is not at all certain that the market for plantation labor in most colonies in the Caribbean was dominated by the planters. Only such a position would permit "despotism." In hiring indentured labor from Asia most planters seemed to be willing to engage many more laborers than were required as a nuclear workforce. The planters seemed to have preferred to pay for the immigration of as many expensive indentureds as would guarantee sufficient labor in order to satisfy their maximum demand during the harvest time. This indicates that the nuclear workforce system was not a persistent preference of the planters and that over time the supply and not the demand has shaped the labor markets in most of the post-emancipation Caribbean. After an initial period of trial and error the formula of a nuclear workforce combined with jobbing gangs had no alternative because of the way in which the freedmen preferred to supply labor. Most Caribbean employers wanted to move away from it because they were unable to tune the arrival of these jobbing gangs to their needs. In fact, in his own study of Worthy Park Craton (1978:281-313) himself shows that the management of this estate was unable to get sufficient labor during the 1840s in spite of making considerable investments, giving up its attempts to charge rents for the cottages and garden plots and offering employment throughout the year. Unlike Craton's suggestions to the contrary, the planters could expect little help from the colonial governments in disciplining the ex-slave labor force. Lack of personnel,

metropolitan abolitionist pressures, and the relatively easy access to land all made it impossible for the West Indian governments to imitate the governments of Western Europe in their attempts to create a labor force which was responsive to monetary incentives (Engerman 1992:60-65). Even in Haiti, the only Caribbean society where no responsibility for the post-emancipation outcome can be attributed to the planters, the elite despaired of resurrecting the plantations by employing the ex-slaves as free laborers. The government of Haiti actually reinstated some kind of forced labor and even made its own plans to import indentured laborers from Asia (Nicholls 1985:95-100).

Another indication of the relatively strong position of the freedmen on the labor market is provided by Craton when he mentions the massive internal migrations between the plantations and – after the ending of apprenticeship – away from the plantations. Each year the planters feared that they would be unable to have enough labor for the harvest, since many freedmen had the habit of changing jobs or leaving the plantation exactly at those critical periods, which were decisive for the profitability of the plantations (Emmer 1993:91-92). I have a suspicion that Craton is unaware that the flexibility of the planters to switch from labor intensive to labor saving production methods was severely curtailed by the fact that – at least until the 1930s – the technology of harvesting sugar cane could not be changed as was possible with milling and refining. Until the arrival of harvesting machines and tractors cutting and planting cane remained extremely labor intensive to the chagrin of both the planters and the freedmen. This suspicion is reinforced by Craton's erroneous notion that the planters had ample economic room in which to maneuver. He assumes that the Caribbean planters would not go bankrupt by offering higher wages, in addition to providing for the ineffective family members of his laborers, by allowing his laborers more time to tend their own private plots, and by providing better housing and more social services in general.

In sum, historians will have to allow that some of the planters' actions were caused by their desire to remain in business and that this desire considerably narrowed their options. In his article, Craton provides us with further indications of his peculiar perspective on post-emancipation economic history. He assumes that the Caribbean became *more* incorporated into the world economy during the course of the nineteenth century. On the contrary, rapidly declining exports after emancipation are an indication of exactly the opposite trend. Non-slave grown Caribbean sugar met with fierce competition, both from slave grown Cuban and Brazilian sugar, but also from new sugar producers in Asia and (later in the century) in Europe (Ward 1988:238-41). Since he writes that slavery merely "lingered on"

(p. 23), it seems doubtful that Craton has yet grasped the economic fact that, after British emancipation, the remaining slave economies of the mid-nineteenth century made the U.S. South, Brazil, and Cuba into areas with some of the highest growth rates in the world of that time and into some of the most powerful competitors of the post-emancipation Caribbean.

Craton's view on the plantation is muddled. It is not clear whether he would have preferred a development in which the plantations had disappeared overnight, forcing all freedmen to become peasants. In a sense this is just what happened in Haiti, which, according to Craton was "largely spared the trammels of developing world capitalism" (p. 24). Except for Craton the benefits of this option must have been invisible to everyone else, since Haiti quickly ceased to be extolled as the shining example of an exemplary economic alternative in the Caribbean. Lacking the relevant direct data, the only way in which we can make some assumptions about the viability of the Haitian peasant economy is by looking at immigration and emigration. For migrants from within and outside the Caribbean region Haiti was not a popular destination. During the nineteenth century the majority of the free labor migrants within the Caribbean region went to the Panama Canal and to Cuba. Craton has as little grasp of the perspective of the post-slavery laborer as of the post-slavery planter. Had Michael Craton as a freedman chosen Haiti in order to escape the arrogance of the planters, the strikes and rebellions, the lack of social services, the absence of a general franchise and the difficulty of obtaining sufficient land, he would have been migrating from the frying pan into the fire.

By the 1830s, Haitian sugar production had virtually ended, although cotton and coffee were still being grown for export. Not a single plantation remained intact. Throughout the nineteenth century, Haiti had the lowest percentage of landless laborers of any Caribbean island. The Haitian freedmen had won their battle for the soil, but the outcome was, at best, a Pyrrhic victory. The history of Haiti for the remainder of the century was a melancholy saga of political instability and economic stagnation. The peasantry remained illiterate, impoverished, and politically powerless. Its lands were divided and subdivided, its economy, despite a flourishing system of internal markets, remained largely subsistence-oriented. The state's fiscal and credit policies stifled the growth of the peasant economy and turned its self-sufficiency to the advantage of a bureaucracy that saw in the masses only a source of tax revenues (Foner 1983:12).

Was the public sector in the other parts of the Caribbean much different from the one on Haiti? According to Michael Craton, the colonial government conspired with the plantocracy, the imperial policy-makers and even the missionaries "to fix the peasant and laboring classes in a Gramscian

hegemonic grip" (p. 41). It is unclear exactly what such a grip entails, but the supposition that the government and the employers would cooperate closely during the early nineteenth century seems a realistic one for most societies at the time. The size of the civil service was extremely limited everywhere and the finances for an increase of an independent bureaucracy were simply not available.

Yet, if ever such an increase was necessary, it was in the post-emancipation slave societies in the New World, where the (colonial) state suddenly was faced by a dramatic increase in the number of its subjects at the very moment of emancipation. The planters and the plantations ceased to offer or were forced to suspend many services which, in non-slave societies, had to be provided for by the government or by private charities. These included food and housing for orphaned children, the poor and the old-aged; medical and hospital care; civil and penal justice; tax collection and education. To provide all of these components of welfare the various local administrative and judicial bodies would have had to be enlarged and staffed by new personnel, preferably recruited from outside plantation America and imbued with the abolitionist ideology.

In view of the obvious disparity between demands and means, the increase in the provision of government services in the West Indies seems remarkable compared to the level of government intervention in the metropole. In fact, government expenditure in the Dutch Caribbean could not be fully financed by taxation despite the fact that emancipation also had created many potential tax payers. Additional subsidies from the metropole were needed, both public and private. I doubt whether this situation was much different in the British, French, and Danish Caribbean. Comparative research is needed here. In any event, it seems clear that the financial and ideological constraints on the role of the government at the time made for continuity, and precluded an increase in the provision of social and judicial services in plantation America, reaching the standards of today. In comparison with the level of government intervention in society in general at the time, however, governmental attempts at influencing labor and living conditions of the freedmen in the Caribbean were considerable and – no doubt due to the abolitionist pressures from the metropole – perhaps less in favor of the employers than was the case in nineteenth-century Europe.

THE FREEDMEN AND THE INDENTURED LABORERS

Most of the existing literature regarding the post-slavery period conveys a deep feeling of disappointment and Michael Craton's contribution on the Bahamas is no exception. For many freedmen the ultimate moment of

liberation never seems to have arrived. Rather than a dramatic cleavage between slavery and freedom, continuity seems to have been the main characteristic of the transition period.

Recent insights into the economics of slavery explain why continuity seems indeed more likely than revolutionary change. As the productivity of sugar cane agriculture was steadily increasing, the other opportunities in the Caribbean economy became less and less attractive. On the eve of emancipation there were virtually no employers waiting outside the plantations seeking to offer the freedmen alternative jobs at higher wages. Only in the less competitive plantation areas as well as in those areas where export agriculture was not the dominant sector did the ex-slaves escape a decline in income by leaving the plantations and going into small-scale subsistence agriculture where they were self-employed.

Most slaves, however, had been employed in areas where export agriculture reigned supreme, and where a rapid rise in productivity provided the planters with the means to meet the demands of both the slaves and the colonial and metropolitan governments for equally rapid improvements in living and working conditions. This is why the "flight" from the plantations needs a more careful analysis than Craton provides. Since the freedmen could offer their labor on a market in which the planters had to compete, it seems difficult to explain why so many ex-slaves quickly withdrew from that market, first the women and children, later followed by the men. It seems doubtful that these women and children earned more in subsistence agriculture than as employees. Again, comparative analysis is necessary. At the same time and for similar economic reasons the number of wage earners among women, children, and men in *Europe* steadily increased. It should be emphasized that after emancipation the rewards paid for plantation labor were distributed differently from the way in which this was done during the times of slavery. The redistributive element inherent to the system of slavery was strongly reduced and the link between the amount of labor and its rewards strengthened. The old, the young, and the infirm all had received food, clothing, housing, and medical care, regardless whether these groups provided labor. After slavery, the young, strong, and healthy who remained on the plantation could earn considerably more than before. Craton's remark that the transfer of the responsibility for the non-productive freedmen to their family members made it somehow "a necessity" for the ex-slaves to take up subsistence agriculture is a *non-sequitur* (p. 47). When in need of more income, the freedmen should have exploited the labor option on the plantations to its fullest extent. There is reason to assume that in several regions in the Caribbean the freedmen could have forced the plantation management to raise the general wage

level to equality (or even somewhat beyond) with the cost of importing indentured laborers from British India and China.

On the other hand, research regarding the economies of the peasant sector after emancipation in the Caribbean clearly reveals the freedmen's disastrously inefficient division and inheritance of land. Equally detrimental to the development of a viable farming sector were the voluntary non-use and communal use of land by the freedmen and the clear absence of an agricultural avant-garde committed to developing this sector, which could have improved plant breeding, imported new technology, and explored new ways of marketing their produce (Ward 1985:57; Besson 1987:14-31, 1995:113-15). In comparison, it is striking to note that later during the nineteenth century the ex-indentured laborers from India were indeed able to turn small-scale farming into a relatively successful sector of the Caribbean economy.

Obviously we are not able to fully grasp the economic choices made by the freedmen until we have more information regarding the alternatives to working on a plantation. The crux of the matter might have been that the system of slavery had never induced the slaves to maximize their incomes and that the freedmen thus gave priority to cultural and psychological preferences when leaving the plantations (Holt 1992:146-68). It should be stressed, however, that virtually all of the alternatives to plantation labor could only be found in agriculture. As most parts of the world during the last century, the Caribbean could not develop and support a substantial non-agricultural sector. In choosing to move away from the plantations after emancipation, the ex-slaves might not have been aware of the fact that they were cutting the ties with the most reliable employment sector in the contemporary economy. In the Caribbean, small-scale farming provided the freedmen with no more than a subsistence income, comparable to that of a Third World peasant today (Klein & Engerman 1985:261-65).

However, in Craton's view the plantations in the West Indies could do no good. As the ex-slaves seemed to hate plantation labor, retrospectively everybody else should do the same. Thus, the massive influx of indentured laborers from Asia can only be explained as a temporary anomaly or aberration. Migrating Asians must have been lured away, given the wrong information by crooks and criminals. Not only was the power of the planters unbroken after emancipation, it was growing and even seemed to have extended to the other side of the globe capturing hundreds of thousands of "new slaves" in its tentacles.

In this regard, as with the analysis of the transition from slavery, Craton again seems to have embraced the now outdated view of the abolitionists. He simply ignores a whole new body of revisionist literature regarding the

Asian migration movements of the nineteenth century. The abolitionists' racial assumption that more than a million Asian migrants were of such limited intellectual capacities as to be misled for the duration of almost a century, deliberately choosing to destroy themselves, was erroneous. In reality the lure of the powerful earning potential of plantation work can be deduced from the massive influx of Asian migrants to the Caribbean. They could have opted to go to many destinations in Africa and Asia, as well to others within India itself. In view of the new findings concerning the major migratory milestones of Indian immigration into the Caribbean: mortality en route and on the plantations, stature, savings, return migration etc. it now seems misleading to compare Asian immigration to the slave trade. In his description of Indian immigration Craton does not take account of the new research, which makes it possible to stress that improvements over time were considerable and that the British Indian government always suspended migration when there was an inexplicable increase in mortality either aboard ship or on the plantations (Emmer 1986; Shlomowitz & Brennan 1994).

As mentioned previously there is no proof that planters only ordered as many indentured laborers as needed in order to create a small, nuclear workforce. There are also no indications that Indian indentured laborers were constantly replaced by new imports simply in order to boost the socio-political power of the planters regardless of the costs. On the contrary, evidence shows that planters were rather keen on reindenturing East Indians already in the colony rather than ordering the recruitment of new laborers from India. Craton's account again flies in the face of the evidence.

The final issue requiring discussion relates to the various revolts and rebellions in the Caribbean. Understandably, these events feature prominently in the article under review, since Craton (1982) himself has published an authoritative study containing a comprehensive survey of slave unrest in the British Caribbean. In looking at the various revolts and rebellions after the ending of slavery, Craton concludes that slaves, freedmen, and indentured laborers fought a continuous and similar struggle against the planters.

As a preliminary observation I would stress that all human communities were and are plagued by internal tensions. I am not so sure whether from the time of Columbus onwards, more people (excepting the Amerindians) were affected by wars, civil wars, revolts, revolutions, and strikes in the Caribbean than in Europe. In fact, there is good reason to assume that virtually all societies in the colonial New World even including the slave societies in the Caribbean, were fortunate in having relatively little vio-

lence affecting relatively limited areas.

Surveying the post-slavery period the various rebellions and revolts in the Caribbean also seem rather mild and infrequent in comparison with the dramatic political and labor unrest in nineteenth-century Europe. Craton – in spite of his expertise on this topic – fails to indicate that most of the post-slavery insurrections in the Caribbean were simply proof of the fact that the tensions of a slave society had been replaced by those of a free society. For example, there is ample evidence that one of the most important causes of the Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica and of the Angel Gabriel Riots in British Guiana can be attributed to the fact that the ex-slaves had not been and were not prepared to cope simultaneously with a constantly changing labor market as well as a changing market for consumer goods in addition to facing yet another novelty: having to pay their share for the rapidly growing number of government services (Ward 1988: 244; Green 1976:381-82).

Of course, by 1876 when the poor in Barbados took to the streets, the freedmen must have grown accustomed to the new conditions and demands on the various markets in which they had to operate. However, as with other human groups they seem not to have been able to easily resign themselves to the fact that their previous standard of living had declined, that their political power remained very small, and that the colonial government was not providing more services. It is not clear, however, which level of income and political influence Michael Craton would have judged to have been “sufficient” for the Barbadian poor, and it is unclear on what grounds he assumes that their position was exceptionally bad in view of the fact that their grievances constitute a perfect description of the situation faced by the majority of laborers in most parts of Europe: lack of land; unemployment; below subsistence wage levels; deaths from starvation; an inequitable system of justice; harsh police regime and disgraceful conditions in prisons and workhouses; almost no social services; and a complete lack of political representation (p. 61).

All this begs the question as to why in Craton’s view the planters can do no good and the freedmen nothing wrong and why he continues to see the Caribbean plantations as the blood-sucking leeches at the periphery of world capitalism. One explanation could be found in the fact that in the post-emancipation Caribbean the planters were so much more powerful and the freedmen so much more weaker than the present-day labor relations – at least in the West – would have allowed for. In comparison with the general state of labor relations in the nineteenth century, however, that observation could well be reversed and only the latter comparison makes any sense. Therefore, in view of Craton’s distinguished record as a profes-

sional historian we must look for another explanation. I have a suspicion that Craton's judgements are founded in the strong desire to show that his heart is with the "underclass" or the "proto's." Thus he hobbles his own historical imagination and undermines our ability to find out *sine ira et studio*, what really happened in the post-emancipation Caribbean.

NOTES

1 My sincere thanks go to Seymour Drescher, Stanley Engerman, Gert Oostindie and Ralph Shlomowitz for their comments, suggestions, and remarks. My indebtedness to them does not imply that they agree with my arguments or bear any responsibility for what I say.

2 For a parallel discussion regarding the danger of using historical constructs in explaining the rise of abolitionism see Davis 1992.

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